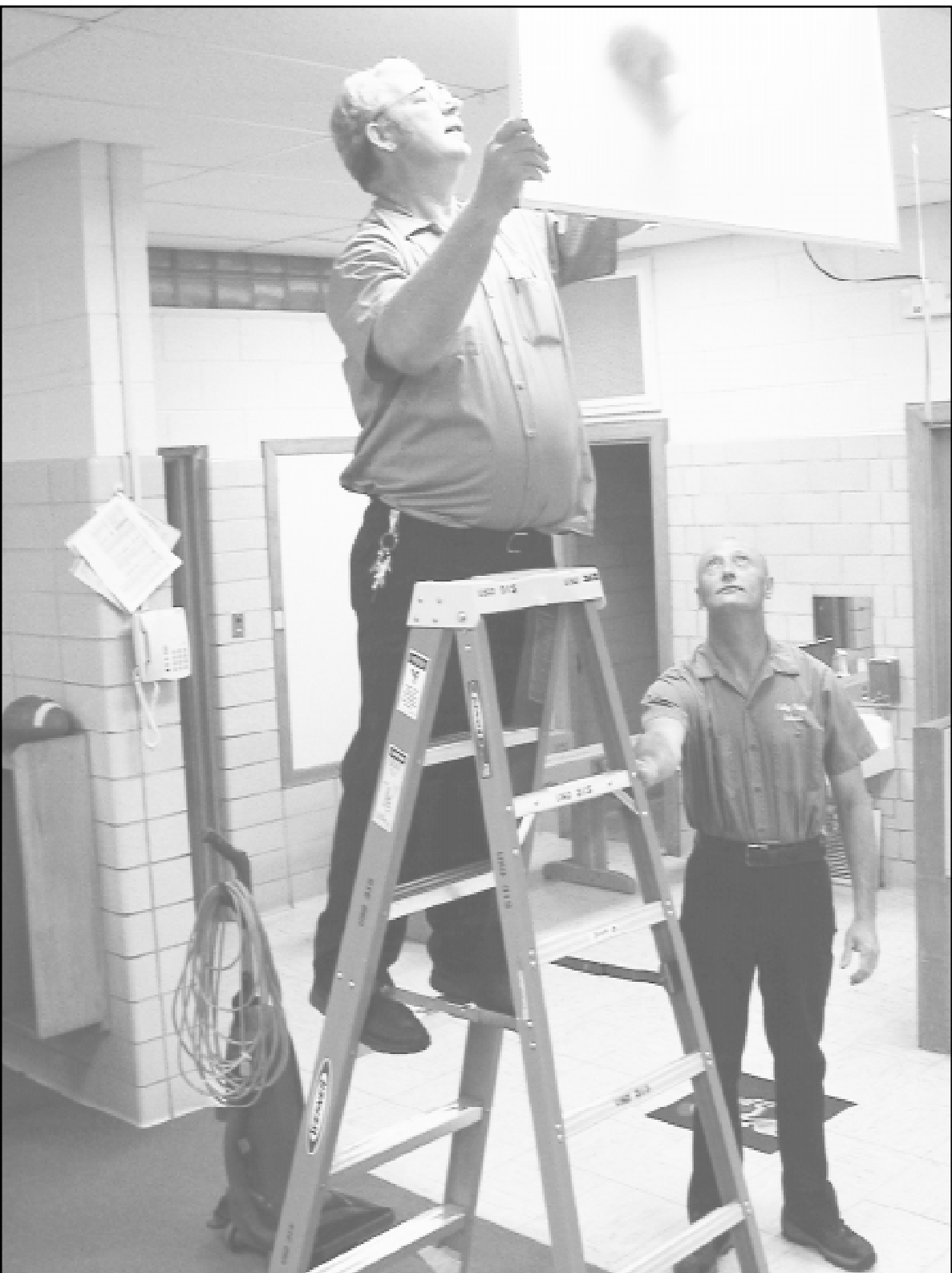




COLBY FREE PRESS

Up and down



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press



Summer vacation has started for Colby students, but not so for the custodial crews working in the buildings in preparation for next school year. **Above:** Richard Schroeder, at the top of the ladder, and Bill Cunningham changed out lights and dusted one of the many rooms at Colby Grade School. **RIGHT:** Moving file cabinets, desks, chairs and other equipment is also part of the schedule. During the summer, school employees will also be stripping and waxing floors, shampooing rugs, rearranging furniture, refinishing two of the gymnasium floors, cleaning lockers and the list goes on.

Drop-out recovery center could soon be Colby reality

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby Board of Education cleared the way for a drop-out recovery program designed to help people get their high school diploma.

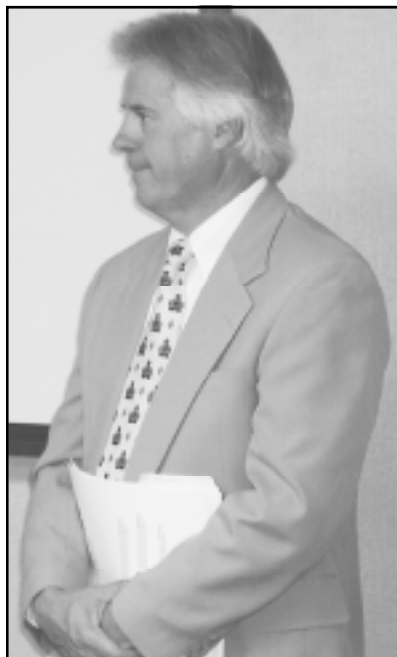
Representatives from the organization, known as Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas, spoke to the board at last week's meeting about the possibility of a learning center in Colby, which could open as soon as this fall.

However, the center's start here will depend on two key issues — finding the right location and the right person to facilitate.

Larry Walker, director of the satellite operation, said the program was created six years ago and now has 40 locations offering courses in geometry, biology, general and physical science, American and world history, English, pre-algebra, math, keyboarding, spreadsheets, databases, and life and employability skills.

"We are divorced from the high school," Walker said, "and we will be looking for a building downtown or somewhere away from the school. We will also need to find the right person to run the center."

Walker said that if all goes well, the learning center would replace the Community Alternative Program, which is currently run by the Colby district.



Larry Walker, director of a satellite learning center operation listened to questions fielded by the Colby School Board.

In addition, there are many advantages in running a learning center as opposed to the alternative program, he said.

For example, under the current program, the hours of operation are limited and not flexible with the needs of students.

"We can run the center from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and we can work around a

student's schedule," Walker said. "We can also offer individualized programs for every learner, students can move at his/her own pace and we offer workplace skills."

Diana Wieland, Colby Public Schools curriculum director, and Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said they contacted Walker about the idea of bringing a center to Colby.

"After visiting (the association's learning center) sites in Kansas," Nielsen said, "I was confident that they would be able to bring an excellent program here."

The center, Nielsen said, will not only help young dropouts, but will also benefit the adult community of Colby. Nielsen assured the school board that this program is not in competition with other programs currently in the community.

Start up costs for the center in Colby would be the sole responsibility of the association.

However, the center would receive state funding by using the alternative high school student enrollment count, Nielsen said.

During the next few days, Walker said his staff will begin advertising for locations and an instructor in the Colby Free Press, along with recruiting possible candidates for the program through the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center and other agencies in the area.

Predictions for corn harvest expected to break all records

WICHITA (AP) — If early forecasts hold, Kansas farmers can expect to harvest the biggest corn crop ever recorded in the state — good news for communities braced for a dismal winter wheat crop harvest.

The latest projections, calculated from planted acres and early corn condition, projects a 2001 corn crop of 525 million bushels, according to the Kansas Corn Growers Association.

That estimate is based on a projection by Bill Tierney, agricultural economist at Kansas State University, of an August corn yield of 148.3 bushels on 3.54 million planted acres. Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service has estimated 3.4 million acres planted in corn.

Those numbers mean nearly twice as much corn as wheat will probably be harvested in Kansas this year.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has forecast Kansas will harvest just 285.6 million bushels of wheat. But the Kansas Wheat Quality Council has called even that forecast too optimistic and, after a tour of the state's wheat fields, has pegged the expected harvest at closer to 277 million bushels.

When winter wheat was seeded last fall, drought conditions were so severe that planting was late and many fields never got a good stand before the cold weather hit.

Then, in the spring, parts of the state were hit by severe infestations of a fungus little known in these region.

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I think we ought to get an ear of corn in there, considering its new crop status in the state."

Jere White, executive director, Kansas Corn Growers Association

By contrast, corn is planted in early spring.

Some of the abandoned wheat acres were planted in corn, and good moisture conditions in many parts of the state spurred more farmers to sow corn this year, said Jere White, executive director of the Kansas Corn Growers Association.

Kansas farmers have finished planting corn, and about 95 percent has already emerged, KASS said.

On Tuesday, the agency gave an optimistic snapshot of the condition of the crop in Kansas: 11 percent was rated as excellent and 70 percent as good. Another 17 percent got a fair ranking, while just 2 percent rated poorly.

The same report gave another dismal rating to the remaining wheat fields: 3 percent excellent, 22 percent good, 36 percent fair, 24 poor and 15 percent very poor.

Kansas is the nation's biggest wheat producer and has long been known as

the wheat state. But corn has risen in importance in Kansas in the past decade as new dryland varieties have made it a viable option in wheat-growing areas.

"Corn is considered a reasonable option to other commodities in almost any part of the state today — and that wouldn't have been an option unless you were irrigated before," White said.

Just 12 years ago, Kansas was growing about 200 million bushels of corn. White credits the new varieties for the recent surge in planted acres, boosted by today's higher yields.

"Tradition is hard to break," White said. "I would note that the last couple of years the lobbyists' badges had a sprig of wheat. I think we ought to get an ear of corn in there, considering its new crop status in the state."

But the state is a long way away from planting the kinds of acres that were put in a century ago, when Kansas planted 6 million acres of corn when little else was grown in the state.

Community Awareness Team continues to develop goals, new focus

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Funding for the Community Awareness Team could become critical in the future, following information provided to the Colby School Board recently by Janet Worthy, one of the team's coordinators.

For the past three years, the group was state-funded through a \$60,000 grant each year, but now has reached

its maximum allotment.

"We are continuing to apply for other grants and assistance as we move forward in addressing new objectives and strategies," she said, "and I think it's important to talk about our successes."

The original funding for the team came about as a direct result of the 1995 Thomas County Health Assessment process when substance abuse was identified as the priority problem, she

said. "The team, at that time, wanted to make sure people knew what the organization was all about — and I think this has been accomplished," Worthy said.

Through measured objectives outlined by the Kansas Communities That Care Youth Survey, school board members were informed of a favorable decline in substance abuse at the high school. According to Worthy, the ob-

jectives of the survey dealt with alcohol consumption in varying questions. In nearly every category, she said, the team's efforts to raise awareness played a significant part in the results. For example, in 1995, 41 percent of Colby High School students said they had not drank alcoholic beverages in the past 30 days. By the year 2000, the percentage of students not drinking was up to 65 percent.

After attending a retreat recently, Worthy said youth members are now looking at changing their vision somewhat to include another identified problem in the community — disrespect.

"The group," she said, "is now looking to promote mutual and self-respect in order to provide a safe and supportive environment at home and in the community." During the past few

years, the team has been involved in activities such as Supporting Our Students (SOS), Students Against Destructive Decision (SADD), and various seminars and lobbying efforts.

"The successes we have had in raising awareness about the problems with substance abuse is not only a credit to the team's work, but also to the school district, board and administration as well," she said.

Briefly

Weather: Mostly dry

Tuesday's 0.38 inches of rain moves Colby's total for the month to 3.35 inches. Dry conditions are expected to prevail for the next couple of days, according to the National Weather Service. Tonight, dry, partly cloudy, low around 50 and light and variable winds. Thursday, dry, partly cloudy, high near 80 and south winds 5-15 mph. Thursday night, dry, clear, low in the 50s. Friday, dry, clear, high 80-85. Tuesday's high in Colby was 68 and the overnight low this morning was 52. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 64 degrees. The records for May 30: 98

in 1989 and 36 in 1906. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Bateman making arrangements

Bateman Funeral Home of Goodland is handling arrangements for the funerals of 29-year-old Jenny (Mills) McCurry and two of her children, James, 6, and Amanda, 5, who died in a house fire on Monday morning. The funerals will be at 10:30 a.m. Friday at the United Methodist Church in Goodland. Koons Funeral Home had been pre-

viously reported as handling arrangements.

College board meets today

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will hold a special meeting today at 5 p.m. in the board room of the administration building to discuss negotiations and any other item of interest.

Festival fund-raising effort set

A car wash to raise money for the Harvest Rock Festival is planned Saturday, June 2, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the

Kansas Quick Lube in Colby. Contributions will be by free-will donation and the car wash will include vacuuming and Armor-All treatment. The festival will be held at Bourquin's RV Park on Saturday, June 16 with Latter Rain, featuring Colby natives Chad and Bret Bourquin, along with three other groups. For information, call (785) 465-9042.

Free compost available

The Thomas County landfill has compost to give away free to whoever will come and get it. If there are any questions, call Larry Jumper, landfill director, at 462-8139.

