



Medical concerns strike three city police dispatchers

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council approved adding a full-time communications officer to the city's police department after learning that three of its experienced dispatchers are needing or receiving medical attention.

Marlene Pfeifer and Keyna Baalman are both being hospitalized, and Sheila Jones will be on sick leave in mid-April for surgery, according to information provided at the council meeting earlier this week.

Pfeifer has been diagnosed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome, which is a condition when the immune system turns against the nervous system.

"Marlene is in the intensive care unit at Hays Medical Center," said Colby Police Chief Randy Jones today. "Keyna is being hospitalized at Citizens Medical Center with back problems and Sheila will be missing after Friday (April 12) for surgery. It's just one of those things and we are getting by, but we miss them."

With respect to Pfeifer, Jones said it could be quite some time before she is able to return to work. "Our prayers and hopes for a full recovery are with her," he added.

He also suggested that if anyone would like to send well wishes to Pfeifer, they can do so by writing her in care of Hays Medical Center, 2220 Canterbury, Hays, Kan., 67601.

Since Pfeifer is in the intensive care unit, for nearly two weeks, flowers are not recommended, but cards and post-cards would be appreciated. Cards for Baalman can be sent in care of Citizens Medical Center, 100 College Dr.,

Colby, Kan., 67701.

In other business:

- Prompted by a request from a Colby businessman, the city council voted to approve including the industrial area on directional signs along Country Club Drive.

The request was made by Larry Oren, owner of L & M Steel, to add the directional signs for the industrial park area, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager. The recommendation was to add four signs at the following locations: Willow at Country Club Dr.; Country Club Dr. at Stephen's Construction; Zelfer and Range Ave.; and College Drive and Range Ave. at a cost of \$165 for each sign. In addition to approving the additional signage, the council also agreed to add a fifth directional sign at Country Club and Highway 24 pointing south toward I-70.

- The council was informed that the Colby Municipal Airport board would be discussing the airport manager's contract. The contract expires on June 1, 2002 and the council will be receiving the board's recommendation prior to the next regular meeting.

- The council learned that its city insurance, which covers city cars, liability, property, worker's compensation, and other related items, is going up by nearly 25 percent. The city currently pays about \$20,000 a year for coverage through Cersovsky Insurance, which underwrites Employers Mutual Insurance. The increase would mean an additional \$5,000 in premiums, Armstrong said. At this point, no action needed to be taken, since the notification was provided as informational only.

Artshow continues tonight



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

More than 1,000 pieces of art created by students from the six schools that comprise the Northwest Kansas League are on display in the Colby High School auditorium from now until Friday at noon. In addition, Scott City students were also included in this year's show. Everyone is invited to visit and view the works of young people at the elementary,

middle and high school level. Hours today are from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m. until noon. ABOVE: Allen Craven, who is an instructor in the art department at Fort Hays State University, was selected to judge the show. This acrylic picture being judged on Wednesday was done by Lori Jumper, a senior at Colby High School.

Effect of budget cuts forces Hammond into Kansas skies

By **TOM A. DREILING**
Free Press Publisher

The budget problem in Topeka keeps Fort Hays State University President Edward H. Hammond awake nights counting students instead of sheep. If the budget mess isn't favorably resolved, sheep could outnumber students.

Hammond said the looming revenue shortfall for the state of Kansas — estimates put it at around \$700 million — threatens to strike what he calls a "debilitating blow" against higher education in Kansas thereby crippling the state's future.

His overriding concern with the budget prompted an early rising Tuesday to board a plane for western Kansas destinations, including Colby, Goodland, Garden City, Dodge City and Liberal. "I felt a need to get the word out, to do something," Hammond said after arriving at Colby Municipal Airport

at 7:30 a.m., wrapped in his overcoat and leaning into cold winter-like winds gusting up to near 40 miles per hour.

The weather wasn't a concern, the flight was smoother than expected, but the potential backlash from the budget crisis was uppermost on his mind.

"The state budget plan now being proposed by the state Legislature," he said after sitting down to breakfast, "would produce a budget reduction so severe for Fort Hays State University that our ability to provide access and a quality education for the people of Kansas would be drastically affected for decades to come."

Hammond said that assessment was not an overstatement. He said budget cuts would deny services to 1,000 of the 7,700 Kansans his institution served last year.

He said that Kansans have long understood that education is the best path to a better life for them and their chil-

dren. Describing the cut as draconian, Hammond said they would negatively impact quality and deny access to higher education for the people of our state. Hammond pointed to two pieces of legislation — HB 2743 and HB 3008 — that, if enacted, would reduce his university's \$32 million state budget by \$4.5 million, an approximate 15 percent slash in funding. He then explained in terms easily understood what that 15 percent reduction would mean: eliminate 100 positions out of the 700-person workforce, or increase tuition by 60 percent.

"The enrollment impact of both those decisions would be devastating," Hammond said. He added that best estimates indicate that such actions would deny access to 1,000 Kansans.

The magnitude of the budget reduction proposed by HB 2743 and HB 3008 would force Fort Hays State University to:

- Cut faculty and staff positions;
- Eliminate programs;
- Cancel classes;
- Increase the student/faculty ratio;
- Decrease library holdings;
- Lead to outdated equipment;
- Generally reduce the number of students served and the quality of education students would receive.

"This is unacceptable ..." he said.

On the topic of tax increases, Hammond said he knows it's always painful to consider tax hikes, but emphasized that budget cuts that undermine the future of the citizens and the state will be far more painful in the long term.

Hammond said he is mindful that those elected to serve want to do what's best for the people... "we know the problem they are struggling with is real. We urge them to remember, though, that the state's excellent public education system is one of the key

Fort Hays State University counts 455 area students

The nine counties in the northwest corner of the state are well represented at Fort Hays State University, according to records the Free Press obtained from the university while preparing the accompanying report Wednesday.

A total of 455 students are listed as being from Thomas, Rawlins, Logan, Wallace, Sherman, Chey-

enne, Decatur, Sheridan and Gove counties. Thomas County leads the list with 102 students, followed by Gove with 70, Logan 56, Sheridan 48, Sherman 45, Decatur 44, Rawlins 39, Cheyenne 35 and Wallace 16. These include freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students and virtual college students.

elements, if not the most important element, in the exceptional quality of life we enjoy and the economic progress the state seeks." Hammond was focusing on western Kansas in his Tuesday travels because Fort Hays State University gets the bulk of those students

who attend college. And he wanted the people in western Kansas to know just what could happen if resolution of the budget crisis takes the wrong turn.

It is his hope that people get in touch with their legislators on this critical matter.

Two separate accidents result in property damage, injury

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

A two-vehicle accident in Colby on Tuesday afternoon resulted in substantial property damage, but no injuries, said Gary Shull, investigator with the Colby Police Department today.

In a separate and unrelated accident on Wednesday in Thomas County, one man was sent to the hospital.

The mishap on Tuesday involved

two Colby women, Krista Ann Mooren, 21, and Samantha Bertrand, 18, when Mooren's vehicle collided with the other on Range and Zelfer Avenues.

Shull said that Mooren's 1996 Dodge Stratus was stopped at Zelfer and as she started to cross onto Range, she struck Bertrand's 1984 Buick, which was northbound on Range. According to the report, Bertrand's vehicle spun around, but both cars ended up still on Range.

There were no other passengers in either car and both escaped injury; however, both cars were disabled from the crash.

"One thing that we were all thankful about was that the I-70 detour was not in effect at that time," said Colby Police Chief Randy Jones.

On Wednesday at 3:30 p.m., the Kansas Highway Patrol raced to the scene of a one-vehicle injury accident east of Colby on U.S. Highway 24, officials said. The accident involved Al-

bino Gamez, 40, of Rexford, who was driving a 1990 Ford and apparently had blacked out.

The Kansas Highway Patrol said as a result, the vehicle rolled into the north ditch and Gamez was partially ejected.

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services responded and transported Gamez by ambulance to Citizens Medical Center where he was later admitted, treated and released.

Heart program postponed

The American Heart Association's program, which was scheduled for Friday from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., at United Methodist Church in Colby, has been postponed, said Linda Hauder, health initiative specialist with the association. "We are postponing the program due to lack of reservations, but we have rescheduled for Sept. 18, in the hopes that more women will be able to attend."

Health/Exercise program set

Michael Bradshaw, K-State Research and Extension Health Specialist, will present "Health Benefits of Exercise" at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 9, at the Thomas

County Office Complex. RSVP to the Thomas County Extension Office (785) 462-4682 by Monday, April 8.

Reservation deadline is Friday

Jim Hoy, folklore and literature teacher at Emporia State University will speak on *Home on the Range: Kansas Folklore* at the Thomas County Historical Society annual meeting. The meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. Friday, April 12, in the Student Union.

Reservations are requested by Friday, April 5. Reservations are \$9.75 each and should be sent to the Thomas County Historical Society, 1905 S. Franklin, Colby, Kan., 67701.

Briefly

Weather: Showers likely

Showers are creeping into the Colby area forecast and temperatures might not climb to the 80 degrees mentioned in an earlier forecast. So, here is the latest from the National Weather Service. Tonight, clear, lows in the mid-30s and south winds 10-20 mph. Friday, partly sunny, highs in the upper 60s and southeast winds 10-20. Friday night, cloudy, 30 percent chance for showers, lows in the upper 30s to around 40 and light winds.

Saturday, cloudy, 30 percent chance for showers and thunderstorms, highs in the upper 60s. Saturday night and Sunday, cloudy, 50 percent chance for showers, lows in the 40s and highs in the upper 50s. Monday, cloudy, chance for

showers, lows in the upper 30s and highs in the lower 60s. Colby's high Wednesday was 41 and the overnight low this morning was 18. Precipitation for the months remains at 0.00. The records for April 4: 89 in 1929 and 12 in 1977. *(The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

Singles dance Friday

The Colby Singles Group is sponsoring its regular monthly dance on Friday from 8 p.m. to midnight with Montana Express of Nebraska providing the entertainment, said Don Birzer, coordinator. The dance is open to all single people and alumni. For questions, call Birzer at 462-2127.

