



COLBY FREE PRESS

S & T breaks ground

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

Members of the Colby business community were on hand at a groundbreaking ceremony this morning to welcome S & T Telephone to town.

"We are really glad to have you in our community," Mayor Warren Hixson said. "You are really important to Colby and we look forward to a long association with you."

S & T Telephone Board President Dale Hudson, wielding a shiny new groundbreaking shovel, said, "It was a challenge getting this decision made (to come to Colby), but we've had a really good response from the community. We will more than double the size of our customer base."

He also said that "we've gone out of our way to hire local people to staff S & T There in Colby. We're very happy to be here."

The expected completion date of the new facility is targeted for the end of summer and will be located just north of Wal-Mart on Davis Ave.



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Members of the Colby business community gathered this morning to help S & T Communications Incorporated break ground for construction of its new facility, located on Davis Ave. The new building is expected to be completed by the end of summer.

Firemen on the go

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby and area firefighters extinguished four small grass fires along Interstate 70 late Friday afternoon and then were called to a shed fire four miles west of town just before midnight, said Bob McLemore, fire chief.

"The grass fires reported at milepost 61, 64, 67 and 48 were very minor," he said, "and were caused when a truck's bearings started going out, throwing sparks into the dry grass."

The Oakley Fire Department put out the grass fires at milepost 64 and 67 and Colby firefighters extinguished those at 61 and 48, he said.

Later Friday night, firefighters responded to a call at 11:45 of smoke in a shed at 1875 Sagebrush west of Colby. The shed, which measured 24' x 36', was on David Knowles' property, he said, with four fire trucks and 12 firefighters responding to the blaze.

The fire took about one hour to control with firefighters remaining on the scene until about 3 a.m., he said.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

McLemore also wanted to remind everyone to be cautious and aware of the drier than normal conditions.

A lot of counties in this area, he said, have already banned controlled burns due to the drier weather, but Thomas County is not one of those. McLemore encourages people to check weather before they consider burning and also that controlled burns are prohibited when winds are in excess of 15 mph.

Call from Colby sparks statewide drive for Big Brothers Big Sisters

WICHITA (AP) — The Sedgwick County chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters is making plans to expand its efforts across the state — and the national organization is watching to see how the effort works. Details aren't complete, but the Sedgwick County

chapter plans to have 89 of the state's 105 counties within the Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters umbrella by 2004. The remaining counties will be served by local chapters.

"This is the first effort like this in the country," said Nick Mork, Sedgwick

County chapter president, who compared the expansion effort to "building an airplane while you're flying."

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America will be watching how the Kansas program works, hoping to use it as a model for other states. The national organiza-

tion wants to serve 1 million children by 2010 — 10 times its 2001 total.

The idea began to take shape when Mork got a phone call from a man in Colby who said his town could use an organization like Big Brothers Big Sisters of Sedgwick County.

Mork couldn't believe what he was hearing. "I've been to Colby, and it's like the set for 'Leave it to Beaver,'" Mork said. "I told him I doubted he had 100 kids in need there. He called back a few days later and said, 'You're right. We don't have 100. We have 150.'"

When Mork mentioned that call and others like it from around Kansas to former Koch Industries vice president Bill Hanna, Hanna asked: Why not take the program statewide?

On Tuesday, Mork will unveil a series of steps to do just that.

Nation's cardinals heading to Rome for unprecedented meeting with Pope

BOSTON (AP) — Cardinal Bernard Law flew to Rome for meetings on the sex abuse crisis in the Roman Catholic Church after telling parishioners that "immediate and decisive changes" were required to address the problem. Law was one of several cardinals to deliver messages to parishioners on Sunday in advance of their unprecedented meeting with Pope John Paul II to discuss a scandal that has shaken American trust in the church.

Law, who has been at the center of much of the growing criticism over the church's han-

dling of abusive priests, appeared in public Sunday for the first time since Easter.

In a "special message" to the 600 worshippers at the Cathedral of Holy Cross, Law said that he would convey to the pope the gravity of the problem and the need for increased protection of children, services for victims and support for active priests. "Some have likened the situation ... to last year's Sept. 11 tragedy, a crisis which shocks the heart and soul and which must spark immediate and decisive changes in order to prevent possible recurrence

in the future," Law said. The cardinals of New York, Philadelphia, Miami, Detroit and Baltimore also had messages of encouragement for their congregations Sunday as they prepared to leave for Rome.

Twelve of the 13 American cardinals are expected to attend the meeting.

"Despite the anger and broken trust that many feel toward me, and despite perceptions that (the meeting) is simply a gathering of aged conservative cardinals and Vatican officials, please know that as long as I am in position to

do so, I will work tirelessly to address this crisis and to underscore its severity," Law said.

Law's remarks were met with applause by parishioners, but outside the cathedral about three dozen protesters called for his resignation and questioned the significance of the Rome summit.

"Nothing's going to come out of it," said Mike McGuire, 38, of Dracut, who was brought up Catholic. "It's just a meeting of the boys club. Too little, too late."

In New York, Cardinal Edward Egan issued

a letter to parishioners, apologizing "if in hindsight" he has made any mistakes in handling sex abuse cases involving priests.

"I will do everything in my power to ensure, as much as is humanly possible, that such abuse by clergy will never happen again," Egan wrote in the letter, which was read at Masses throughout the weekend. "You should expect nothing less of me, and the leaders of our church."

Cardinal Adam Maida of Detroit apologized for "mistakes made by Church leaders — here and elsewhere" in a letter read last weekend.

Prom smiles



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Erin Schafer, a Colby High School senior, was escorted by Tucker Olsen, sophomore, to the prom Saturday night at the Comfort Inn convention center. About 200 students attended, which was coordinated by Randy Koons, junior class sponsor. Each year, members of the junior class plan prom activities for their senior classmates and parents of the juniors act as chaperones. Over 100 spectators lined the hallways of the convention center and outside to watch the promenade. This year's colors for the event were gold and royal blue.

Briefly

Hot and cold forecast

The weather handles for the Colby area should be labeled "hot" and "cold" for this week. High temperatures will vary from the 80s to the 50s. The 80s are expected to occur on Tuesday and Friday, and the 50s on Saturday and Sunday. There will be a middle 60 on Wednesday and a middle 70 on Thursday. Overnight temperatures will range from the upper 20s to the upper 40s during the period. There is no moisture mentioned. Sunday's high was 65 and the overnight low this morning was 29, climbing to 41 by 8 a.m. Precipitation for the month is 0.17 inches, after the weekend's 0.04 inches. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 54 degrees. The records for April 22: 93 in 1937 and 16 in 1899. *(The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

Workshop postponed

A workshop developed by students at Colby High School, which was planned for tonight at 7 p.m. in the commons area has been postponed, said Janet Worthy, overseeing the event. The program will be rescheduled for a later date, she said. For questions, call 462-8152.

Ferguson reception canceled

A reception honoring David and Lois Ferguson of Colby, who were selected to receive honorary associate degrees, has been canceled, said Debbie Schwanke, public information officer. The reception, which was planned for 3 p.m., Tuesday, will not be rescheduled; however, the couple will be recognized at the Colby Community College commencement ceremony in May, she said.

County hosts bike, safety fair

The Thomas County Health Department will be sponsoring a free bike Rodeo and Safety Fair from 4-6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 1, at the Thomas County Office Complex. The event is open to children ages 6-12 with supper served. Keyna Baalman, Colby Police dispatcher, will instruct the children on aspects of bicycle use and safety. The bikes will be inspected for any servicing they might need and the health department will register each child's bicycle with the

police department. Bicycle helmets can also be purchased at the time of registration. For questions or to register, call 462-4596 and give the model and make of your child's bicycle.

Rexford plans annual clean up day

The City of Rexford is having its annual clean-up campaign on Saturday, April 27, beginning at 9 a.m., said Kathi Hapke, one of the organizers. For those who would like to drop off old appliances (no freon) can do so on Friday, April 26, when a trailer will be available at Rexford City Hall for that purpose. For those unable to bring items to that location on Friday, Hapke asks that they call (785) 687-3340 or (785) 687-2400 for arrangements. For those who can volunteer time at the clean up, Hapke asks they be at the Rexford Community Building by 9 a.m. the day of the event.

Parking regulations revisited

With the warmer weather and as people begin turning their attention to recreational activities, the City of Colby is reminding its citizens that no truck, motor vehicle, camper, trailer, machinery or equipment can be parked on any street or alley within the city in excess of 48 hours, officials said. The police department is authorized to remove and impound any of these types of vehicles that would be in violation of this regulation, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

School board meets tonight

The Colby School Board will hold a meeting tonight at 7 p.m. in the administration building at 210 South Range Ave. After approval of the consent agenda, the board will discuss the budget, under unfinished business. The board will then discuss and possibly take action on personnel items, including employment recommendations, resignations, and an intent to non-renew. The public is invited.

Middle school orientation Tuesday

Parents of fifth grade students at Colby Elementary School or those planning to attend Colby Middle School next fall as sixth graders are urged to attend an orientation meeting Tuesday, at 7 p.m. For questions, call 465-5200.

