



COLBY FREE PRESS

Colby High seniors prepare for Sunday commencement

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby High School seniors attended their last day of class today as they prepare for graduation ceremonies on Sunday at the Colby Community Building, said Bryan Bullington, principal.

For families and friends planning to attend the celebration, Bullington said Baccalaureate will be held at 1:30 p.m. in the Little Theater with commencement in the gymnasium at 3 p.m. to recognize the 83 graduates.

In addition to the traditional announcement of the valedictorian and salutatorian, this year's guest speaker will be Gary Musselman, he said.

"Gary is the executive director of the Kansas State High School Activities Association," Bullington said, "and currently resides in Silver Lake."

Bullington said he is a native of Ness City and graduated with honors from Kansas State University receiving his

master's degree in educational administration from Wichita State University. Musselman is a former high school and junior high school English teacher and the former principal of LaCrosse High School.

He joined the state's activities association in 1993 as an assistant executive director and in July of 1996 became only the sixth executive director in the history of the organization, Bullington said.

"Gary is in his sixth year as the executive director and has been an instrumental leader in the progressive changes that have occurred," he said. "He and his wife, Nancy (Stitzel), who is an elementary school teacher in Silver Lake, have two sons: Paul 19, and Matthew 16."

Prior to Sunday's commencement, the seniors have been involved in other related activities to include the academic awards ceremony and a video viewing, both held last week.

Budget or no budget, session ends today

TOPEKA (AP) — Negotiators fashioned a new budget-balancing package of \$257 million in tax increases, and Republican leaders declared they would end the session tonight even if it didn't pass.

Legislators were trying to fill a \$290 million hole in the \$4.4 billion budget they sent Gov. Bill Graves for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

The tax package drafted by House and Senate negotiators wouldn't quite raise enough money, but GOP leaders accepted it as better than nothing.

The House had rejected all significant tax increase proposals, and leaders of both parties saw little progress Tuesday until negotiators finished their work. The session entered a record 105th day Wednesday.

Today ushers in the 106th day.

Elements of the newest package were in two bills. One, to be considered first by the House, would raise the state's 4.9 percent sales tax to 5.3 percent on July 1, then drop it to 5.2 percent in 2004 and to 5 percent in 2005.

It would also raise the 24-cent cigarette tax to 89 cents, double the wholesale tax on tobacco products to 20 percent and tax property inherited by nephews, nieces and non-relatives.

The estimated \$261 million in revenue from those steps would be offset by tax breaks worth \$5.7 million to poor families and another \$3.6 million to businesses.

A separate bill, to be taken up first by the Senate, would generate \$5.5 million by raising the wholesale taxes on beer, wine and liquor.

"It is at least another step forward," said House Taxation Committee Chairman John Edmonds, R-Great Bend, one of the negotiators.

House Speaker Kent Glasscock and Senate President Dave Kerr planned to end the session tonight even without passage of a tax plan. Graves has promised to call legislators into the first special session since December 1989 if they don't approve a tax package.

"Something's got to happen here pretty quick," said Glasscock, R-Manhattan. "I am disinclined to continue this rather pathetic agony."

It is the worst thing you can do policywise for economic growth."

John Edmonds,
R-Great Bend,
and negotiator

Without additional revenues, Graves planned to cut \$300 million.

In the 125-member House, support for the new measures was expected from most of the 79 Republicans. But many conservative Republicans continued to oppose any tax increases, and Democrats remained insistent that income taxes should also be raised.

Democrats said higher sales and excise taxes would raise the prices of consumer goods and hurt the poor and working class.

"It still seems to be a one-way street," said House Minority Leader Jim Garner, D-Coffeyville.

Republicans said raising the income tax would stifle the growth necessary to pull Kansas into an economic recovery.

"It is the worst thing you can do policywise for economic growth," Edmonds said.

Kerr, R-Hutchinson, painted House Democrats as obstructionists.

"I think people can clearly see where the problem is and where the obstruction is," the Senate president said. "It's with House Democrats."

Democrats countered that Graves and GOP leaders have provided weak leadership and given the minority party's ideas only cursory attention.

Democrats also said moderate Republican leaders should get conservative votes for what was largely a GOP tax plan — and conservatives were feeling strong pressure.

"I know what an egg feels like on a frying pan," said conservative Rep. Tony Powell, R-Wichita.

Music in the air



LEA BANDY/Colby Free Press

Colby Middle School students joined their high school counterparts Tuesday night for a vocal concert in the high school auditorium. **ABOVE:** Vocal Director Chris Latta (on chair) led the concert with middle schools tudents performing in the background. **AT RIGHT:** Brandon McLemore (left), Melissa Augustine and Alex Marshall prepared to sing at Tuesday night's vocal concert. Senior band members will be performing also in the high school auditorium during their final concert of the year on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. The middle schoolers will be performing one last time on Tuesday, May 21, in conjunction with the art department. That performance will be at 6:30 p.m. in the grassy area at the east end of the Intermediate building.



Garden City called nation's drug crossroads

GARDEN CITY (AP) — This south-central Kansas town is a crossroads between the Mexican border and Los Angeles, to New York, Chicago and Kansas City.

Being in the middle of the country, drug distribution routes from Garden City can lead to all corners of the nation. The major U.S. highways - 83, 50 and Interstate 70 - are nearly straight

shots to major metropolitan areas.

That location, according to Iowa and Nebraska law enforcement officials, makes all the difference when it comes to the trafficking of methamphetamine.

"If the importation of meth through Garden City, Kansas, could be stopped, we wouldn't have a meth problem in our states," Iowa and Nebraska law

enforcement officials told the U.S. Attorney's Office in Kansas.

The federal Drug Enforcement Administration has stationed an office in Garden City to monitor drug trafficking through the area. It's part of the Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, and includes Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

According to HIDTA, these states "provide a fertile environment for the production and distribution of methamphetamine primarily by Mexican organizations."

The predominantly rural areas of Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and the Dakotas mean economies firmly rooted in an agricultural-related industry that employ thousands of Mexicans.

Catholic priest gunned down for not apologizing

BALTIMORE (AP) — A man charged with gunning down a Roman Catholic priest had grown frustrated after being unable to get an apology from the priest, who he claimed fondled him over a three-year period, the man's mother said.

Dontee Stokes, 26, shot the Rev.

Maurice Blackwell after the priest refused to talk to him, police spokeswoman Ragina Averella said. Stokes was charged with attempted murder, gun violations and assault and was being held without bail.

The shooting — the latest development in the sexual abuse scandal that

has roiled the Roman Catholic Church — drew pained reactions from church leaders, with Baltimore Cardinal William Keeler saying he was "appalled" by the violence. Stokes' mother, Tamara Stokes, accused the archdiocese of mishandling her son's molestation allegations.

"All he wanted was an apology due to what had happened," she said Tuesday night in front of her home as family and friends stood around her holding candles and praying for Dontee's release. Blackwell, 56, was in serious but stable condition at University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center.

Briefly

Could get some rain

Look for the 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s for the rest of the week and into the weekend, if the National Weather Service forecast for the Colby area holds true. Moisture chances range from 30 to 50 percent. Here's the scoop: Tonight, mostly cloudy, a 50 percent chance for showers and thunderstorms, lows in the upper 40s, northeast winds 10-20 mph; Thursday, a 30 percent chance for showers in the morning and rain in the afternoon, highs in the mid-60s, northeast winds 10-20 mph; Thursday night, mostly cloudy, a 30 percent chance for rain, lows in the lower 40s; Friday, mostly cloudy, highs only in the 50s; Friday night through Sunday, cloudy to partly cloudy, lows in the upper 30 to mid-40s and highs in the upper 60s to mid-70s. Colby's high Tuesday was 84 and the overnight low this morning was

48. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 62 degrees. The records for May 15: 97 in 1931 and 25 in 1907. *(The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

Landfill closed for holiday

The Thomas County landfill will be closed Sunday, May 26, and Monday, May 27, to observe the Memorial holiday weekend, said Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor.

Scouts to raise camp funds

Boy Scout Troop 89 will have a pancake feed on Saturday starting at 7 a.m. in the Colby Community Building. They will serve pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee. A free-will donation will be accepted to raise funds for the troop

to go to Camp Hansen June 16-22. Troy Price is the scoutmaster.

Spaghetti feed fund-raiser planned

The Colby High School faculty and administration is sponsoring a spaghetti feed in the commons area of the school, from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Monday, May 20, to help defray medical expenses for a fellow teacher's daughter. The fund-raising event is for three-month-old Brielle, the daughter of Paul and Tawnia Bange, who will be undergoing open heart surgery in Denver on May 31. For those who might be unable to attend the free-will donation dinner, Brette Pfeiffer, one of the coordinators, suggests calling her for other alternative ways to contribute. For questions, call Pfeiffer at 465-5300.

Colby schools showcase artwork

All Colby Public Schools are taking part in an art show beginning next week. Everyone is being encouraged to view the many talents of these students at the elementary, middle and high school levels, said Donna Roberts, high school art instructor. Colby High School and Colby Elementary School have planned their artshows for 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and again from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, May 17, in the art departments at each building. The Colby Middle School's artshow is scheduled for Tuesday, May 21.

Spring Sports program Monday

There will be a Spring Sports Awards Program, Monday, May 20, beginning at 7 p.m. in the high school auditorium. Parents of students are invited to attend the event.

