



COLBY FREE PRESS

Mail call

There's still time to get all those packages to family and friends

By **DARREL PATTILLO**

Colby Free Press

It might be a little late to mail some holiday packages, but there still is time to get others on their way.

That's the word from Colby Postmaster James McDonald.

McDonald said the time has come and gone to send air mail internationally, but gifts and packages can still be sent by parcel post internationally. He cautioned that air-mail parcel packages should be mailed by Monday, if they're going to reach their destinations by Christmas.

"And domestic packages should be mailed by Dec. 15," he said.

McDonald also had instructions for preparing packages to be mailed. "Make sure everything is well wrapped," he said. "Do not try to mail packages wrapped in just Christmas gift wrapping. Use corrugated card-

board box with brown shipping wrap. Gift wrapping is not very durable!"

McDonald also had an important tip for addressing packages. "In addition to putting the address on the outside, put both your address and the receiver's address inside of the box you're sending. That way, if the wrapping is damaged, we'll still have a way to get it where it's supposed to go."

McDonald also stressed that people should think safety when sending things through the mail. "Don't send anything hazardous in nature, like large amounts of batteries, or chemicals. Just be safe," he said.

As the Christmas holiday nears, lines at post offices begin to grow. Employees are doing their best to keep up with the flow and if postal officials were allowed a two-word tip to pass along, it would probably be, "Have patience."

Sanitation surcharge approved by council

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

A sanitation surcharge will be going into effect immediately for items beyond the normal residential trash collection following a unanimous vote by the Colby City Council at its meeting Tuesday.

For the most part, the problem and subsequent decision to impose a surcharge, was initiated because of landlords using the city's sanitation service as a "clean-up" service when tenants move out, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

As a result, the council voted to include an additional \$25 surcharge on any articles above and beyond the normal trash collection. Armstrong said those items will include such things as mattresses, desks, and other larger pieces of furniture.

The owner of the property would then receive a bill for those items.

The issue came to the city's attention, she said, when landlords continue to stack broken furniture, mattresses, desks and other large items in the front yards of vacated rentals with the expectation that the city trash service should collect these things as routine household garbage.

In looking at ways to address the problem, Armstrong said, it was discovered that clarification was needed in the ordinance since this was not specifically covered.

In a separate matter, the council also voted unanimously to direct the city manager and Joel Kriss, city attorney, to send letters to those whose property is along the east alley in the Pine Hill addition, notifying that there are encroachments in the alley's right-of-way on the north.

The area in question is east of the Court Terrace cul-de-sac and would

affect eight residents. The concern for city crews is that they need to access the alley in order to provide maintenance on the sewer line and cannot do so because the property owners have basically taken over the alley as part of their property with trees, sheds and other improvements being made, Armstrong said.

The council decided to give these residents until April 1, 2003 to move the encroachments or face having the city bulldoze the obstructions in order to clear the alley for routine maintenance.

In other council business:

- Approval was given to grant Dr. Karen Thummel a special use permit to build a 20' x 25' addition to her dental office at 480 W. 4th St.

This particular special use permit was previously reviewed by the planning commission and recommended by its members. The permit needed to be reviewed and approved by the council in order to comply with zoning requirements.

- The council approved the home occupation permit application for Hensley Health and Wellness at 435 W. 4th St., along with approving the application for license to allow Kabredlos, Inc., 1615 W. 4th, to sell cereal malt beverages.

- The resolution to approve the *Colby Free Press* as the official city newspaper was granted, along with other routine resolutions conducted annually.

- The council approved a three percent raise for Kriss as city attorney, which Armstrong said was consistent with the budgeted amount for contracted employees.

Effective January of 2003, Kriss will receive a salary of \$2,342 per month. His salary in 2002 was \$2,273.

Santa's helpers at work



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Three of Santa's little elves were busy wrapping Christmas presents this morning at Puddle Duck Preschool in Colby. The public is invited to take a tour of "Santa's Workshop" and see the display of Christmas

trees and creative art done by the preschoolers. Puddle Duck is located at 520 W. 5th Street. Pictured left to right are Matthew Hanzlick, Carter Morrison and Quinlee Niblock.

Investigation continues into Stuckey's fire

MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

Investigation continues as to the origin of the Saturday night fire at Stuckey's restaurant, two miles south of Brewster along Interstate 70.

The fire destroyed the restaurant as well as the manager's living quarters. It was called into 911 at 10:35 p.m. from the alarm company which services the stores.

Both Brewster and Sherman County Rural fire departments responded to the scene, but were unable to save the building.

In addition to the two fire departments, assistance was offered by Thomas County Sheriff's Department, Thomas County Emergency Medical Services, Kansas Highway Patrol and Midwest Energy, who were called in to cut the power supply to the building.

Suspicion has risen about the fire, since there have been at least three fires at Stuckey's recently and the building is up for sale, according to officials.

Mike Baughn, Thomas County undersheriff and Brewster mayor, said before Saturday's fire, Brewster and Sherman County firefighters had been

called to Stuckey's to put out a fire in the restaurant's office on Monday, Nov. 25, just five days before. He said that fire was likely caused by a cigarette being thrown in the trash can before it was fully extinguished.

Before that, Baughn said, there was a fire in the grill area that employees put out themselves and wasn't reported.

The former manager of the Brewster restaurant who now runs the Stuckey's in Grinnell said there was a fire at the Brewster Stuckey's while she was there. She said a clothes dryer malfunctioned and caught on fire. The dryer was replaced, she said, because the manufacturer found it was defective.

Baughn said officers felt the Stuckey's fire warranted a full investigation.

"When you have three fires in a short time," he said, "and the building is up for sale, it makes you want to do the fullest investigation possible."

Only one individual, 19-year-old Jacob Koch, was in the building at the time of the Saturday night fire.

Koch is a cashier for the restaurant and lives with restaurant manager Sa-

rah Divine, in the apartment attached to the restaurant. He was able to escape uninjured. Divine was reportedly visiting another Stuckey's employee at the time of the fire.

In addition to the restaurant, Stuckey's is also a gas station. Baughn said the gas storage tanks had been filled the day before the fire. Firefighters did a good job of keeping the flames away from the gas pumps, he said, and dousing the pumps with water. The storage tanks will probably be emptied, he said.

To assist with the investigation, the Kansas State Fire Marshal's Office at Topeka was called in.

Mike Cameron, public information officer and research analyst for the fire marshal's office said today that Melvin Dale, one of the office's 12 investigators, has been assigned to the fire. Along with Dale, K-9 handler Mark McCleary and his black Labrador Retriever, Roxanne, are assisting with the case.

Cameron said that during the investigation, Dale will be searching for the origin and cause of the fire and any physical evidence that may exist. He

will also be conducting interviews with both Koch and Divine as well as other witnesses and authorities that assisted in the fire.

McCleary and Roxanne were on the scene on Sunday to canvass the area for accelerates. Roxanne is trained similarly to a bomb dog and is trained to detect hydro-carbons. These would be found in gasoline, petroleum and other fossil fuels.

Cameron said that the K-9 unit is called in sometime to help investigate when it has been determined that there are multiple origins for a fire, but can be used for other reasons as well. He was not aware of the reason the team was used on this particular investigation.

Once complete, the report from the state fire marshal's office will be turned over to local jurisdictions. The area now is being considered a crime scene.

Cameron said, "This is a very complex investigation. Sometimes investigations such as these take months."

The Grinnell Stuckey's manager said the owner of the Brewster restaurant is a Georgia man named Fred Miller.

Tiny Kansas town grows by 10,000

COUNTRYSIDE (AP) — The mayor of this tiny Kansas City suburb finally got what he wanted. On Tuesday, Ken Davis' constituents voted Countryside out of existence.

Residents in the six-square-block enclave, overwhelmingly voted to merge with neighboring Mission. The

election drew a 71 percent voter turnout, with consolidation prevailing by an unofficial margin of 127-69.

"It's a landslide," said Davis, the merger's leading supporter. Davis said the cities would probably unite by mid-January. After adding Countryside's 300 residents, Mission will have a

population of about 10,000.

"In the long run, people are going to be happy with their lower taxes and ability to participate in the bigger community."

Voters last turned back a merger question in 1998 by a margin of 2-to-1.

WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

The numbers

Tuesday's high, 30
Low this morning, 20
Year ago today, 63 and 22
Temperature at 11:15 a.m. today, 35

Records for Dec. 4: 74 in 1946, -4 in 1902

The forecast

Tonight, partly cloudy to cloudy, patchy fog, lows upper teens, northeast winds becomes west late 5-10 mph. Thursday, cloudy early then becoming sunny, patchy fog early, warmer with highs in the lower 40s, west winds becoming north late 10-15 mph. Thursday night, clear, lows near 20 and Friday, sunny, highs in the lower 50s.

Briefly

Fund raiser planned Saturday

There will be a special meal prior to the Colby High School boys basketball game beginning at 5 p.m. and until the end of the first quarter of that game on Saturday, said Tom Beckman, high school girls basketball head coach. The event, which will be held in the basement of the Colby Community Building, is to help Ivy Ramsey, a Colby High School junior, defray surgery and rehabilitation costs incurred during the summer. The menu will include barbecue pork sandwiches, potato salad, chips, dessert and drink for \$5. Along with the cost of the meal, each person will also receive a numbered ticket with a chance of winning a \$25 gift certificate from the Sports Shoppe.

Area children invited to write Santa

Area children are invited to submit letters to Santa Claus which will be published in a special edition of the Colby Free Press on Friday, Dec. 20. Children can mail letters to Santa at 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or drop them by the newspaper office

between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Deadline for submitting letters will close of business on Friday, Dec. 13. For questions, call the editorial department, 462-3963.

Pancake feed planned Saturday

The High Plains Lions Club is sponsoring a pancake feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday at the Colby Community Building. The cost is \$3 per person with proceeds going toward various community projects.

Project will benefit carnival group

The Thomas County Amusement Association will be the beneficiary of "Charity Appeal Day," an annual project of Wal-Mart. A portion of all sales on Dec. 7 (Saturday) from 7-11 a.m. at the Colby store will be forwarded to the amusement association in its quest to create a home-owned carnival.

Donations still needed for Genesis

As the Genesis Thomas County Food Bank board makes final

preparations for this year's annual Christmas basket project, Geri Landry, one of the coordinators, is reminding everyone that donations are still needed. "Donations are down this year," she said, adding that individuals or groups that can offer financial assistance would be appreciated. For those wanting to make a contribution to help the food bank in buying the necessary items not in stock for the distribution on Saturday, Dec. 14, are asked to make checks payable to Genesis, P.O. Box 214, Colby, Kan., 67701. For questions, call Landry at 462-2258.

'Coats for Kids' drive underway

The Colby Jaycees are once again collecting coats for youth in need. Anyone in the community interested in donating good, clean winter coats in sizes from infant to adult are asked to drop them off at one of the two collection boxes in town, said Bonnie Lewis, one of the organizers. The boxes are located at Dillons and Pioneer Memorial Library beginning today. The actual distribution of the coats will be on Saturday, Dec. 21 at the Jaycee Center. For questions, call Lewis at 462-3627.

