



10 pages

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## Stuckey fire rumors said unfounded

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS  
*The Goodland Daily News*

State investigators haven't pinned down the cause of a fire which reduced the Stuckey's Restaurant in Brewster to rubble a month ago, but officials say a rumor that it was caused by a drug lab probably isn't true.

Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones said rumors that an illegal methamphetamine lab caused the fire are unfounded.

Jones said the final reports from the state fire marshal's office have not been received. He said the reports should indicate the cause and origin of the fire.

"There isn't any indication one way or another if that (rumor) would be true or not," he said.

The blaze was reported at 9:35 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30, by the alarm company serving the restaurant south of Brewster and north of I-70. Brewster and Sherman County firefighters spent more than six hours battling the fire, which also leveled the manager's apartment attached to the restaurant.

Investigators from the fire marshal's office brought in an arson

dog, trained to detect petroleum products such as gasoline. Mike Cameron, spokesman for the fire marshal's office, said the K-9 unit is usually called in when there are multiple origins of a fire, but can be brought in for other reasons as well. He said he didn't know why the dog was used this time.

Cameron said the investigation could span months, but reports would be sent to the Thomas County Sheriff's Office when complete.

"This is a very complex investigation," he said.

Jacob Koch, 19, a cashier, was the only employee in the restaurant when the fire started. He was not injured. He and Sarah Divine, the manager, were a couple and lived in the apartment behind the restaurant.

The night of the fire, Divine reportedly was visiting another Stuckey's employee.

Originally, sheriff's officers thought the fire might be suspicious since there had been at least three blazes at Stuckey's shortly before the one which destroyed the property, and the building had been for sale for at least three months.

## To quench the thirst



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Colby Public Schools maintenance workers Bob Brown (left) and Mike Lee installed a new water fountain in the weight room at Colby High School this morning. "We've gotten a lot of work done over the (holiday) break," Brown said. "It's a good time to get to stuff that we can't do while school is in session."

## Lab work underway for Fair

By DARREL PATTILLO

*Colby Free Press*

The Colby Wellness Committee is gearing up for this year's fair, which takes place Jan. 18 at the Colby Community College Student Union, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Although the fair doesn't take place for another two weeks, those wishing to can get lab work done Saturday Jan. 4, and Saturday, Jan. 11 at Citizens Medical Center.

"Participants can come to the hospital's outpatient clinic," said committee member Jeanene Brown. "From 6 to 10 a.m., they can get blood drawn, and get the results the day of the fair."

Brown said that lab work on blood drawn will include a lipid profile, a complete blood count, and a serum glucose test, which is a screen for diabetes. The cost for this blood work is \$12.

"At the Wellness Fair itself, a \$5 fee will get you cardiovascular testing, body fat testing, as well as testing for flexibility and grip strength. You'll be able to get your blood pressure checked, a stroke risk assessment, and a screening for oral cancer," Brown said.

Also, she said, a skin cancer test will be given, a check for colon cancer, glaucoma, and a hearing test will also be available.

And a \$12 fee will get participants a bone density screening. Men will be able to get a prostate exam for \$18 dollars as well.

"The college nursing department will also have activities for children in a side room," Brown said.

## Inauguration features noted Kansas man

TOPEKA (AP) — Broadcaster Bill Kurtis will be a visible part of the events surrounding Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius' inauguration.

Sebelius' transition office announced that Kurtis will serve as master of ceremonies for both the Jan. 13 swearing in of state officials and the evening inaugural dinner and ball.

Kurtis, an Independence native, began his career at WIBW-TV in Topeka as a reporter and eventually became a national morning news anchor for CBS.

He also owns an 8,000-acre buffalo ranch in Chautauqua County and is leading efforts to revitalize downtown Sedan.

## Gephardt to get into the big race

WASHINGTON (AP) — Departing House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri has decided to kick off his second run for the White House in 14 years by forming a presidential exploratory committee, The Associated Press has learned.

An invitation obtained by the AP says Gephardt will raise money for the exploratory committee at an event Jan. 22.

## Speeding stork gets ticketed

## Baby delivered in parking lot of the Riley County jail

MANHATTAN (AP) — Had her dad not been stopped for speeding Thursday morning, Kayla Lynn Harper might have been born in a hospital, like most babies are.

But at least there were plenty of paramedics at the place Jeremy Harper chose to stop — the parking lot of the Riley County Law Enforcement Center.

"This is going to be a story I'm going to tell for the rest of my life," Harper said after his wife, Tabatha McMillan, gave birth to Kayla in the front seat of their car.

Harper, 24, had been at his job as a warehouse manager in Junction City when he received the call from his 4-year-old son that McMillan was going into labor.

McMillan drove from their Junction City home to the warehouse, and the couple headed for Mercy Regional Health Center.

While en route, Harper was pulled over for speeding by Riley County Police Officer Erin Anderson. After frantically explaining that his wife was in labor, he jumped back into his car

with the officer's blessing and continued on toward the hospital.

"I was probably going 90 the whole way," Harper said. "I was trying to make it." They got as far as the law enforcement center when they realized that wasn't going to happen.

In the parking lot they were quickly assisted by Lt. Kurt Moldrup, the department's first-aid trainer and himself a father of nine.

Three paramedics arrived in an ambulance and delivered Kayla in the front passenger seat of Harper's car. The newborn, weighing 6 pounds, 14 ounces, and her mother were then taken to the hospital.

Larry Couchman, Riley County's emergency medical services director, pronounced Kayla's birth a "textbook" delivery. And Harper said he's happy to be the father of a healthy baby girl.

"As long as she's healthy, she can be born in the back of a garbage truck," he said.

Everybody is reportedly doing okay. Even the stork.

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush is putting together an economic stimulus plan likely to raise major objections among Democrats that it is heavily tilted to higher-income taxpayers.

In an effort to pre-empt those arguments, Bush branded such objections as a false effort by opponents to pit different income classes against each other.

"Some would like to turn this into class warfare," he said after giving reporters a tour of his Crawford, Texas, ranch on Thursday.

"That's not how I think. I think about the overall economy and how best to help those folks who are looking for work."

While Bush refused to disclose any details of the plan he will unveil in a speech in Chicago next Tuesday, White House officials said that two major components are likely to be an acceleration of personal income tax rate cuts that were included in the 2001 tax bill and a new tax break for investors who get income from corporate dividend payments.

Because higher income individuals, who pay more taxes, get the biggest benefits from rate cuts, the administration had considered not accelerating the scheduled reductions in the top tax rate, currently at 38.6 percent, but instead focus just on the three lower rates.

However, this idea prompted a storm of objections from conservative groups and a senior White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said late Thursday that Bush had decided against excluding the top rate from any acceleration.

This official, however, said that Bush still had not made the final decision to go ahead with an accel-

eration in the rate cuts.

The next rate cuts are not scheduled to go into effect until 2004 and 2006.

The other key component of the president's plan is expected to be a reduction in taxes paid on corporate dividend payments, a long cherished goal of conservatives.

However, in a bow to arguments that these payments flow primarily to higher-income Americans, the administration is considering limiting the amount of the tax reduction in this area to far less than the total elimination of dividend taxes that many conservatives would like to see.

One option is exempting the first \$1,000 in dividends from taxes, which would have the benefit of making stock purchases more attractive to middle-income Americans while not providing a huge windfall to the wealthiest investors with vast stock holdings.

Even with modifications, Bush's plan when it is unveiled is likely to differ drastically from Democratic proposals.

Sen. Max Baucus, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, last month put out his own \$160 billion stimulus proposal.

Baucus would provide a one-time \$300 tax cut for individuals and \$75 billion in block grants to cash-strapped states.

In a signal that Bush will have to compromise on whatever plan he puts forward next week, Republican Sen. Charles Grassley, the incoming chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said that any proposal will need bipartisan support "given the realities of working in a closely divided Senate."

For that reason, some analysts said Bush may opt to include some

tax breaks that would have appeal for Democrats, such as accelerating increases in the child tax credit or planned reductions in the so-called marriage penalty imposed on two-earner couples.

Those changes were included in the massive \$1.35 trillion tax cut Bush got Congress to pass in 2001, but they are not scheduled to become fully effective until later in this decade.

However, supply side Republicans are warning the administration that it should not stray too far from reductions in marginal tax rates and business tax breaks, which they believe do the best job of stimulating economic growth.

"There is no question that the left will try to drag out the pagan god of class warfare and say this is just a sop to the president's rich friends," said Daniel Mitchell, an economist at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

"The purpose of making these changes is to get more investment into the economy and create more jobs. That's what really matters."

In addition to accelerating rate cuts and reducing taxes on corporate dividend payments, the president was also considering including an expanded tax break for businesses to encourage more capital investment and possibly making a down-payment in fixing problems in the alternative minimum tax.

The AMT was originally intended to make sure the wealthy did not escape paying some income taxes but is now hitting more and more middle-income taxpayers.

Bush's entire stimulus package is expected to cost \$300 billion over a 10-year period, according to those tracking the proposal on Capitol Hill.

## WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

**The numbers**  
Thursday's high, 43  
Low this morning, 12  
Records for Jan. 3: 67 in 1964, -22 in 1911  
**The forecast**  
Tonight, partly cloudy, lows near 30, northwest winds up to 15 mph. Saturday, cloudy, highs in the upper 50s, northwest winds up to 15 mph. Saturday night, cloudy, lows in the upper 20s. Sunday, cloudy, a 50 percent chance for rain, highs in the upper 40s. Sunday night and Monday, cloudy, a 50 percent chance for snow, lows in the mid 20s and highs in the lower 40s.

## Briefly

### Commissioners meet Monday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet Monday at 9 a.m. in the commissioner's room of the courthouse. Items on the agenda include Chris Bieker, county roads supervisor at 9 a.m.; Linda Vaughn and Donna Bennett of Waddell and Reed will meet at 9:30 a.m.; Ken Ptacek, Jon Selley and Chris Bieker at 10 a.m.; and Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor will give a report at 10:30 a.m.

All meetings are open to the public. For questions, call Tracey Perkins, Thomas County clerk, 462-4500.

### College board cancels meeting

A special meeting of the Colby Community College board of trustees was held earlier today via the telephone, said Bev Anderson at the college. The meeting was originally scheduled for Monday, Jan. 6, but was rescheduled for a later date. More information on today's special meeting will appear next week.

### Share sign up begins Monday

Share sign up for January will be held Monday through Friday, Jan. 6-10 at State Farm Insurance Company, 905 E. 4th St., Colby. For information or questions, call Anna Fyfe, coordinator, 462-3733.

### Schools reopen on Monday

The countdown is underway. The holiday break from classes for schools in Thomas County will end on Monday, at regular times. Classes were dismissed for the break on Friday, Dec. 20.

### Feed to benefit amusement group

The Colby Knights of Columbus will hold a pancake feed in the basement of Sacred Heart Church on Saturday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. All proceeds will go to the Thomas County Amusement Association. The public's support is appreciated.

### Food bank schedule noted

The Genesis Food Bank will be open its regular hours on Wednesday, Jan. 8, from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m., said Rosalie Seemann, president of Genesis.

### CPR class planned this month

The American Red Cross will be sponsoring a CPR Class on Thursday, Jan. 16 at the Colby Community College Student Union. Call Mary Smith at 462-7161.

### EMTB Course continues

Kathi Wright, Thomas County EMS director, said the EMTB (basic) Course is continuing on Mondays and Wednesdays — through April and additional information is available by calling her at 462-4585.

### Landfill on winter hours

The Thomas County landfill is on its winter hours. Monday-Friday, 9-5 p.m.; Saturdays, 9-4 p.m.; Sundays, 1-4 p.m.

