



## Those traveling tumbleweeds



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

It was the first time that Don and Anne Guilfoyle of Colby experienced what they called a “blizzard of tumbleweeds,” but that’s exactly what happened Wednesday night when the northwest winds blew hundreds upon hundreds of them into their yard. “For all we know, those tumbleweeds could have traveled more than 40 miles,” Don said. As for Anne, the strange phenomenon means

that once the winds die down, they will have a lot of work to do in disposing of the tumbleweeds. “We have always had a few tumbleweeds in the past, but normally this time of year, there would be snowdrifts butting up against the garage not tumbleweeds,” she said. Anne and her son, Joe, looked in disbelief at the mounds of tumbleweeds scattered across their property.

## Experts: Drought hastens aquifer’s depletion

LAWRENCE (AP) — Drought is speeding up depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer so much that a University of Kansas researcher calls the problem “as pressing or more pressing” than it ever has been before.

Eight university scientists recently spent a week in western Kansas to measure the water levels of 500 wells that draw water from the aquifer. They discovered the water level is dropping faster than it did in the last de-

cade.

“What happens when it gets dry, people pump more, so they’re drawing on it more,” said Rex Buchanan, associate director of the Kansas Geological Survey. “These numbers clearly show the issue of depletion of the Ogallala is out there, and it’s as pressing or more pressing as it has been.”

The Ogallala stretches from northern Texas to South Dakota and is a major source of water on the High Plains. In addition to the uni-

versity study, the state’s Division of Water Resources tested 700 other wells in the area, reaching similar findings.

Rural irrigation in western Kansas has been drawing water from the aquifer faster than nature can replace it, and in some areas the aquifer has dried out.

Two years ago, then-Gov. Bill Graves set the goal of zero depletion of the aquifer in Kansas, but farmers and western Kansas lawmakers opposed that goal.

Sen. Stan Clark, R-Oakley, said the study shows the need to decrease water use before the aquifer situation gets worse.

“Quite honestly, we need to move to an economy that doesn’t require the Ogallala, and we must begin that separation soon,” Clark said. The economy of western Kansas relies heavily on wheat and livestock, two areas of agriculture that require a lot of water. Lately, totals have been nowhere near what is required.

## Gov. Sebelius’ budget is said a mixture of policy, politics and luck

By JOHN HANNA

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA(AP)—Gov. Kathleen Sebelius’ proposed budget is a deft mix of policy and political strategy. But it depends upon stable state revenues — an assumption that appears questionable.

Before the Democratic governor delivered her State of the State address Wednesday, some Republican legislators doubted she could propose a budget that protected public schools from further cuts without raising taxes or slashing funds for higher education and social services.

But Sebelius proposed shifting money from highway projects and local governments to public schools, higher education and so-

cial services. She also recommended the state set aside almost no emergency funds during its 2004 fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Republicans, who had seemed ready to pounce, were relatively kind after her speech. House Speaker Doug Mays, R-Topeka, described the Sebelius budget as “at first blush, not bad.”

GOP legislators remain skeptical because they believe tax revenues won’t meet expectations in coming months. But they acknowledged that Sebelius has a budget plan she can sell.

“I thought it was a smart presentation politically,” said Sen. Derek Schmidt, R-Independence.

Sebelius proposed spending some \$313 million that the state

normally would set aside for emergencies by the end of fiscal 2004, leaving only \$500,000.

Last year, Republicans reduced the amount of emergency funds, so she is borrowing their idea but taking it to its maximum extent. Also, some officials argue the state faces a true emergency now — the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

But the state would have no cushion should revenues fail to meet expectations. Through December, revenues were \$22 million short of the official forecast.

State Budget Director Duane Goossen acknowledged, “Clearly, we’re budgeting on a very thin margin with this.”

The \$10.2 billion budget that

Sebelius outlined is about \$21 million smaller than the current budget. Of the total, \$4.5 billion would come from state tax revenues.

She kept a campaign promise by proposing to continue spending \$3,863 per pupil on elementary and secondary schools.

She also would trim only \$5 million from higher education’s \$671 million appropriation of general tax dollars — all from the Board of Regents’ central office.

For the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Sebelius restored about two-thirds of the emergency cuts made by her Republican predecessor, Gov. Bill Graves. Services budget before he left office.

Sebelius also found money to

keep minimum-security prisons open, hire 70 new highway patrol troopers and give state employees a 1.5 percent pay raise.

The biggest loser is the Department of Transportation. Graves withheld \$95 million in highway funds in the current fiscal year; Sebelius wants to take another \$165 million in fiscal 2004.

But Sebelius blunted potential criticism by saying she’s still committed to the state’s 10-year, \$13.5 billion transportation program. For many legislators, it’s appropriate to choose education and social services over roads in the short-term.

“The highway program is a 10-year program that may become an 11-year or 12-year program,” said House Minority Leader Dennis

McKinney, D-Greensburg. “Problems in social services are immediate, and if they’re not handled properly, people get hurt this year.”

Sebelius also proposed that the state eliminate \$86 million in payments to cities and counties, on top of \$48 million Graves withheld in the current budget.

While such a decision could encourage local governments to raise property taxes, Sebelius noted that the \$86 million represents about 2 percent of their total budgets.

In her speech, she said education and social services are more important.

Mays endorsed the proposal, saying local governments need to tighten their belts along with state government.

## Brrr Mercury takes nose-dive

By TOM (TD) DREILING

Free Press Publisher

If your furnace worked overtime during the night, there was a good reason.

It’s called *cold*.

Colby experienced its coldest night of the current winter season when the mercury nose-dived to 2 degrees above zero in the wee hours this morning, reports the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby, where the community’s official weather records are maintained.

On the morning of Jan. 10, the mercury dropped to +6, the coldest winter reading of the season — until this morning. On Jan. 11, the overnight low was +7.

January is proving to be a roller

coaster month, with the highest reading so far being the 70 degrees reported on the 8th.

The average soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is right at the freezing mark.

The forecast calls for temperatures on Saturday to be in the mid 40s with lows Saturday morning somewhere in the teens, according to the National Weather Service office at Goodland.

There was no moisture during the past 24 hours; in fact there has been no moisture to speak of yet this month, save a few traces. December also produced a big fat zero in the moisture column.

In January of 2002, Colby received 0.57 inches of precipitation, including 6.2 inches of snow.

## Everything is ‘go’ for ‘03 Wellness Fair

By PATTY DECKER

Colby Free Press

This year’s Wellness Fair is set for Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Colby Community College Student Union and organizers have set up a variety of screening exams and informational booths to help kick off the New Year in a healthy way.

As in previous years, lab work prior to the fair was held on Saturday, Jan. 4 and 11 to give fairgoers an opportunity to test lipid profile, serum glucose and get a complete blood count.

The lipid profile offers participants a chance to screen cardiovascular risk, the serum glucose is a check for diabetes and the blood count testing included an anemia screen, said Jeanene Brown, director of education at Citizens Medical Center and one of the Wellness Fair committee members.

“Results of the tests,” she said, “will be available on Saturday, along with an explanation.” Participants are asked to check the time schedules for those presentations that will be posted at the registration desk when entering the fair.

For \$5, fairgoers can also get screening exams for skin cancer by

staff from Heartland Dermatology Center in Hays, oral cancer from Colby-area dentists, a colorectal screening kit from the Thomas County Health Department to check for colon cancer, urinalysis testing that is used to screen for a variety of health problems, glaucoma screening exams by area optometrists, blood pressure checks and stroke risk analysis by Family Center for Health Care staff, and screening evaluations for hearing by the Northwest Kansas Hearing Services.

Fitness testing will also be among the highlights at this year’s fair, Brown said. Those tests include cardiovascular endurance, body fat analysis, flexibility, strength and even a bone density analysis, which is a screening for osteoporosis, for a small additional fee.

“Women can also sign up for discounted rates on mammograms, breast, pelvic exams, and PAP smears that would be done at a later date,” she said.

Nurse practitioners from Colby Medical and Surgical Center, along with those from the Family Center for Health Care will be participating in the women’s health exam programs.

### WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

#### The numbers

Thursday’s high, 33  
Low this morning, 2  
Temperature at 11:00, 31  
Records for this date: 71 in 1950, -17 in 1930

#### The forecast

Tonight, clear, lows mid teens, northwest winds 5-10 mph, increasing late to 20-30 mph. Saturday, sunny, highs mid 40s, northwest winds 20-30 mph with gusts to 40, then becoming southwest late and decreasing to 5-10 mph. Saturday night, clear, lows 10-20. Sunday, sunny with highs 60-65. Monday, clear, highs upper 50s.

### Briefly

#### Church group to hold soup lunch

The Colby United Methodist Senior Youth Group will hold a soup lunch on Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the church. The menu includes chili, chicken noodle, taco and corn chowder, drink, relishes and desserts. The cost is a free-will donation. Proceeds will benefit the youth group’s activities. All are invited.

#### Commissioners meet Monday

The Thomas County Commissioners will hold their regular meeting at the courthouse, Monday, beginning at 9 a.m. with a report from Chris Bieker, road supervisor, and Rovohl Township. Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor, is also slated to talk about the landfill at 9:30 a.m. For other questions or information, call Tracey Perkins, county clerk, at 462-4500.

#### Monday is holiday for some

Monday is the annual observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and some places of business will be closed.

The *Colby Free Press* will publish and deliver newspapers on that day. If you plan a trip to town, you might want to check ahead to see if your appointed rounds will be open.

#### Actors wanted for college play

Auditions for the Colby Community College spring production “Angel Street” and the college’s touring children’s show will be held Tuesday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center on the campus. Actors interested in “Angel Street” are asked to prepare a one- to two-minute monologue. Those interested in the children’s tour will read from the script. For questions, call Walter Yuhre at 462-3984, ext. 783.

#### Leftover commodities available

There is a limited amount of commodities left from the December, 2002 distribution that will be given out on Tuesday from 10 a.m. until noon at the Retired Senior Volunteer Program’s office in the Colby Senior Progress Center, said Laura Withington, coordinator. Eligible persons may receive these items according to the USDA guidelines on Tuesday.

Those items include potato flakes, canned potatoes, raisins and instant milk. For questions on eligibility or the program, call 462-6744.

#### Genealogy group meets Sunday

The Family History/Genealogy group will meet at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, at Pioneer Memorial Library, Colby. There will be a video on the use of *Personal Ancestry File 4* which can be downloaded free at Familysearch.org, and discussion of submitting information to *Ancestral File* for preservation at the same location. All interested persons are welcome.

#### Cemetery board changes dates

The Colby Cemetery District board meetings will be held on Thursdays instead of Mondays for the next couple of months, said Relda Galli, board member. The meetings; however, will still be held at the Thomas County Courthouse beginning at 2 p.m. Board members should note that Thursday meetings include Jan. 23, Feb. 20, March 20 and April 24. For questions, call Galli at 462-3670.

