



Drought chatter: 'Looks like it's about over'

By TOM (TD) DREILING

Free Press Publisher

Colby's rainfall total for the past 24 hours — 8 a.m. Wednesday to 8 a.m. today — is 0.57 inches, moving the month's figure to 1.50 inches.

Since the first of the year, the Northwest Research-Extension Center here, has recorded a total of 3.28 inches of precipitation. That compares with 1.38 inches for the same period in 2002.

January 2003 was a moistureless month, February brought 0.40 inches, March 1.38 inches and so far

in April 1.50 inches.

In 2002, January produced 0.57 inches, February 0.22, March 0.16 and April 0.42.

April's average for Colby dating back to 1893 is 1.89 inches. The January-April average for the same period is 3.79 inches.

Street chatter yesterday and again today centered around the status of the drought with the prevailing opinion being, "looks like it's about over."

This morning's rains are not included in this report, but will add nicely to Friday's totals.

Colby High musicians to state on Saturday

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby High School band and vocal students will be in Gypsum for state competition Saturday to compete in solo and ensembles, said Julie Groom, band instructor.

The soloists include Talitha Nye, vocal; Katie Molstad, flute; Matt Hutfles and Josh Cox on bass clarinet; Tony Brown, tenor sax; Reed Shoaff, horn; Taylor Miller and Jared Dinkel, trombone; Theo Kleinsorge and Alex Kleinsorge, tuba; Karen Higerd, drumset; Joey Melnyk, timpani; Stephen Mardock, snare; and Elizabeth Waterman, violin.

There are also eight various band and vocal ensembles participating. Those include the girls vocal trio, flute trio, woodwind trio, woodwind quintet, saxophone quartet, clarinet choir, percussion ensemble and low brass choir, Groom said.

Students who qualified for the state event traveled in late March to Oberlin to participate in the regional solo and ensemble competition. Vocalists entered one trio and four solos in the regional event, Groom said. Soloist results included Tess Baumfalk, III; Hope Daniels, II; Talitha Nye, I; and Alisha Talsma, III.

The band entered eight ensembles and 30 soloists at Oberlin. Ensembles receiving a "I" rating were: Flute trio (Rikki Lane, Rachel Funk and Sara Sanford); Woodwind trio (Katie Molstad, Valarie Higerd and Sarah Redmond);

Woodwind Quintet (Molstad, Katie Friesen, Baumfalk, Shalin Brogan, and Reed Shoaff); Clarinet Choir (Brogan, Leanne Juenemann, Higerd, Amanda McIlroy, Matt Hutfles, Redmond, Josh Cox and Tony Brown); Percussion Ensemble (Higerd, Joey Melnyk, Tanner Glad, Stephen Mardock, Matt Coplin); and Low Brass Choir (Taylor Miller, Shane Carter (student director), Amy Dickman, Rusty Helin, Jared Dinkel, Dara Nichols, Theo Kleinsorge, Collin Bielser, and Alex Kleinsorge).

The brass choir took a II rating with members Scott Smith, Korissa Call, Luke Rogers, Taylor Miller, Shane Carter, Amy Dickman, Rusty Helin, Jared Dinkel, Brian Seemann, Trey Hamilton, Reed Shoaff, Paul Schrick, Darla Nichols, Theo Kleinsorge, Collin Bielser, Alex Kleinsorge and Brandon Williams.

Instrumental soloists getting a "I" rating in Oberlin were: Katie Molstad on flute; Matt Hutfles, Josh Cox on bass clarinet; Tony Brown, tenor sax; Reed Shoaff, horn; Taylor Miller, Jared Dinkel, trombone; Theo and Alex Kleinsorge, tuba; Karen Higerd, drumset; Joey Melnyk, timpani; Stephen Mardock, snare and Elizabeth Waterman, violin. Instrumental soloists receiving a "II" rating were: Hope Daniels, alto sax; Matt Augustine, bari sax; Amy Dickman, Trey Hamilton, trombone; Darla Nichols, euphonium; and Tanner Glad, marimba.

I nterstate incident



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

Details are sketchy of an early morning one-car accident today at the Levant exit on Interstate 70. Shortly before 8 a.m. highway patrol, EMS, fire rescue, motor carrier inspectors and the Thomas County Sheriff's office responded to the scene. Although reports from the Kansas Highway Patrol were not completed,

on-site reports suggest that the driver, a man from California, had exited and intended to reenter onto I-70, but missed the on-ramp. His car went through the south ditch and collided with a tree. Name of the driver and his condition were not available when this report was prepared late this morning.

According to director's report...

Public works department busy in 2002

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council reviewed the 2002 work report for the public works department at its meeting Tuesday. The purpose of the report, said Gerry Bieker, public works director, is to give the council a better idea of what goes on in this portion of the city's structure.

In his review, Bieker said the public works department includes streets, water, waste water, parks, maintenance and sanitation, logged about 49,000 hours last year.

With 25 employed in public works, Bieker outlined projects in the various areas that make up the department.

"The street department," he said has seven employees, "one of which is a full time sweeper operation and another that mows full time in the summer months."

There were 27 projects within the street department, he said, ranging from removing an island on S. Range and constructing Horton

Avenue to creating handicap ramps and crack filling and hole patching on streets throughout the city.

"The cost for major new construction for streets within Colby was estimated at \$700,000 if done by a contractor," Bieker said. However, by doing the work "in-house," city crews were able to complete the work at an estimated \$350,000.

Taxes for the street department, he said, is about \$65,610 with about \$40,677 of that paid by the residential taxpayer. In breaking that number down based on 2,200 residents in the city, Bieker said the average taxpayer pays \$18.49 per year to the street department.

In the water and waste water department of public works, Bieker said there are five employees maintaining all public water supply wells, waste water treatment plan and more than 40 miles of water main and sewer main with more than 4,500 water and sewer taps.

Responsibilities within the water department include meter reading,

Christmas decorations, repairing leaks, filling in on trash truck, pool preparation, along with maintenance and repairs during the season, large concrete pours, meter repairs, installing and relocating new water mains and new services.

"The city's seven water wells ran 17,177 hours and pumped nearly 665 million gallons of water," he said. "The city has 711 million gallons of water rights and if not for conservation measures would have over ran these rights."

The parks department has two full-time employees and maintains eight parks with a total area of 161 acres, according to the report.

In explaining park responsibilities, Bieker said maintaining the parks includes mowing, weed eating, restroom upkeep, tree trimming, painting and staining buildings, trash pickup, spraying, tennis court upkeep and controlling noxious weeds.

With respect to the cost incurred by the taxpayer, Bieker said based

on the mill levy of \$14,306 with \$8,870 of that paid by residential taxpayers, the cost per year to each resident is about \$4.03.

There are six employees in the sanitation department taking in a total of nearly 4,500 tons of trash each year. Based on the tipping fee, expenses and revenue, the average profit in this department was about \$1 a ton.

Bieker told the council that based on this amount, he predicts that changes are going to become mandatory to keep this part of the department viable.

The maintenance department within the public works department maintains more than 120 pieces of equipment for the city.

"This equipment includes everything from police cars to loaders and push mowers," he said.

Council members told Bieker they appreciated the organizational report, which they said gave them a better understanding of what types of things fall under public works.



60s, 70s forecast

Tonight...cloudy. Lows near 40. North wind 10 to 15 mph becoming light early in the morning. Friday...partly sunny. Highs in the mid 60s. Southeast wind 5 to 10 mph. Friday night...mostly clear. Lows in the lower 40s. Saturday...mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 70s. Saturday night...partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers and thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 40s. Chance of rain 20 percent.

The numbers

Wednesday's high, 64
Low this morning, 41
Year ago today, 59 and 39
Records, 94 in 1906, 25 in 1958
Month's precipitation 1.50
Water Usage/Colby
April 23 = 1.30 million gallons

Military impact on state hailed

TOPEKA (AP) — The state's three major military installations said they added more than \$1.34 billion to the Kansas economy last year, providing stability and jobs while other sectors of the economy faltered.

An official with the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing said Wednesday the military's figures for Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley and McConnell Air Force Base should not be taken lightly.

"The military is a different animal," said Steve Kelly, deputy secretary of commerce. "It's not on the same cyclical lines of the rest of the economy."

Kelly said the military provides a stable work force at a time when aviation and agriculture have suffered from recession and drought.

Fort Riley is the state's largest military installation, hosting more than 10,000 soldiers, 12,000 family members, 19,000 retirees and 4,100

civilian employees. The military said that translates to \$688 million in economic impact on the state in the 2002 fiscal year, an increase of almost \$74 million from the previous year. Over recent months, the post has played a role in the training of more than 5,000 reservists who were deployed for duty in the Iraqi war and for homeland security.

Lt. Col. Mike Shepherd, a spokesman for Fort Leavenworth, said the impact totals \$200 million.

Briefly

Barbershop concert Saturday

The Tumbleweed Chorus will hold their annual concert on Saturday. The choir will present "Dixieland Harmony" at both 3 and 7:30 p.m. at the Colby Community College Cultural Arts Center. Tickets may be purchased at the door for \$8 or in advance for \$7. For tickets or information call 462-6552 or 460-8640. The concert will also feature guest appearances by Very Light Opera Company and Patent Pending.

Benefit for infant scheduled

A benefit pasta lunch is scheduled for Sunday from noon to 2 p.m. at the Colby United Methodist Church to benefit Braden Beims, infant son of Mitch and Cortney Beims of Colby, who has undergone a second open heart surgery. The fund raiser will be a free-will donation.

School plans 'Renaissance Day'

Colby High School is sponsoring a "Day at the Renais-

sance" on Friday with activities beginning at 9 a.m. Formal presentations for sixth through twelfth grade students start at 9:15 a.m. with participants in costume and exhibiting fighting, dancing and fire eating. The formal portion of the presentation will end at 10:15 a.m. with informal presentations at demonstration tables from 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. After lunch, the same schedule will again be held and everyone is welcome to stop by and visit, school officials said. For questions, call 465-5300.

Volunteers to be recognized

A tea and recognition for volunteers of Prairie Senior Living Complex in Colby has been planned for Friday, May 2 at 2:30 p.m. Anyone who has volunteered or is interested is welcome to attend.

4-H Dog Show Saturday

There will be a 4-H Spring Dog Show at 10 a.m. on Saturday at the 4-H Building at the Thomas County Fairgrounds,

Special features schools

Today's Colby Free Press will be a lot thicker than usual. Today we include a special section that deals with northwest Kansas schools.

The 28-page section is a combined effort of all the papers in the Nor' West Newspaper group, and takes a look at shrinking enrollment and a shrinking state budget.

It looks at the benefits and problems of small schools, the history

of some districts, transportation, land transfers, cooperative agreements, consolidation and what the state legislature is trying to do for , as well as to, rural schools.

Photos and stories include schools at Brewster, Cheylin, Colby, Edmond, Densmore, Gem, Golden Plains, Goodland, Herndon, Jennings, Lenora, Logan, Norcatur, Northern Valley, Norton, Oberlin and St. Francis.

said Carrie Bredemeier, dog project leader. The event will be a learning experience for beginners or for those wanting to improve showing their animals. The categories include obedience and showmanship, she said, and everyone is welcome to attend and watch the 4-Hers.

Vendors wanted for flea market

Rexford PRIDE is sponsoring its Farmers/Flea Markets during the months of May through September, said Evelyn Johnson, one of the coordinators. The events will be held on the first Saturday of each month with the first one on May 3 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Booth cost for vendors is \$10 with a lunch stand provided by various community organizations.

Childbirth classes set for May

Expectant mothers are invited to attend childbirth education classes scheduled for May, said Amy Hutfles, one of the teachers. The classes are from 7-10 p.m. on Thursday, May 1, 8, 15 and 22 in the Health Sciences Building on the Colby Community College campus.

