



12 pages

COLBY FREE PRESS

Friday

April 25, 2003

50¢

Volume 114, Number 79
Serving Thomas County since 1888

Rain totals climb

By TOM (TD) DREILING

Free Press Publisher

The numbers are pretty impressive and have moved the drought talk to the back burner.

The immediate Colby area is posting some healthy precipitation amounts for the month of April, and also for the four-month period — January-April.

So far this month, the Northwest Research-Extension Center on the city's west side, shows 2.22 inches of rain has soaked their gauge, and for the first four months of 2003, 4 inches of precipitation has fallen.

In April of 2002, the center recorded only 0.42 inches of precipitation, and for the four months a total of only 1.37 inches.

April's average precipitation here is 1.89 inches and the four-month average is 3.79, thus Colby is up over those numbers.

Colby's precipitation amounts for April are as follows (as recorded at the Research-Extension Center): 6th, 0.08; 7th, 0.22; 16th, 0.57; 17th, 0.06; 23rd, 0.16; 24th, 0.41; and 25th, 0.72.

Here is the four-month comparison chart:

- January 2002, 0.57; January 2003, 0.00
- February 2002, 0.22; February 2003, 0.40
- March 2002, 0.16; March 2002, 1.38
- April 2002, 0.42; April 2003, 2.22

I-70 accident claims driver

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

A 30-year-old California man died as the result of a one-vehicle accident at the Levant exit on Interstate 70 on Thursday morning.

According to reports from the Kansas Highway Patrol, Randy Y. Mercado of Elk Grove, Calif. died en route to Denver on flight-for-life. Mercado was initially transported to Citizens Medical Center in Colby.

The highway patrol said Mercado was going west on I-70 in a 2000 Nissan Maxima, when he exited at Levant. After crossing U.S. 24, he entered the ditch and crashed into a tree.



70s Saturday

Tonight...mostly clear. Lows in the mid 40s. East wind 5 to 10 mph becoming south late. Saturday...mostly sunny. Highs 70 to 75. South wind 10 to 15 mph. Sunday...partly sunny. Highs in the upper 60s to around 70. Monday...mostly cloudy. A chance of showers and thunderstorms in the afternoon and evening. Breezy. Highs in the upper 60s to around 70..

The numbers

Thursday's high, 65
Low this morning, 40
Year ago today, 60 and 25
Records, 92 in 1989, 24 in 1910

Precipitation past 24 hours up to 8 a.m. today, 0.72

Month's precipitation 2.22

Water Usage/Colby

April 24 = 1.036 million gallons

Fiber Freddie and friends



CRYSTAL RUCKER/Colby Free Press

Between 500 and 600 people attended the open house at S&T Communications in Colby on Thursday. Shawna Eberle, marketing assistant, Gary Slough, director of sales and Jada Tubbs, director of the Chamber of Commerce (above), joined the S&T mascot, Fiber Freddie in the festivities. Currently, S&T is able to service about one third of Colby and will be starting service to portions of the downtown district this week. The company started signing up customers in February. It is estimated the entire area will be able to have service by fall.

Water consumption totals again appearing in Free Press

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

With warmer temperatures just around the corner, the city is turning a watchful eye on its conservation plan by reporting daily water consumption totals, said Gerry Bieker, public works director.

"The reason for putting the production totals in the newspaper each day," Bieker said, "we can inform the public of the trigger points."

Trigger points are measurements, he said. For example, a water watch is issued when daily water production reaches 3.5 million gallons for three consecutive days.

In this type of watch, the plan would be for the city to heighten public awareness of the situation while monitoring uses and curtail certain activities.

When water usage reaches 4 million gallons production for three consecutive days, the city's plan is to limit unnecessary uses of water,

such as day time watering may be restricted or excess water use charges could begin.

When the city's production is 4.5 million gallons per day for three consecutive days, the city could ban outdoor water use and waste of water would be prohibited, Bieker said.

"If some conservation can take place before we reach the warning and emergency levels," he said, "maybe we can avoid the strict restrictions this year."

There are several triggering mechanisms within the plan, but production totals are the most prevailing.

In addition to the water conservation plan, Bieker wanted to remind everyone that there will be at least one month of water discharge from the new Environmental Protection Agency's water treatment plant.

However, Bieker said he wanted to stress that the water discharge

from the treatment plant has nothing to do with the city's conservation plan.

"Our plan relates directly to the City of Colby's water rights and the production of water from our wells," he said. "The water plant must go through at least 30 days of production, producing good drinking water, before the city can accept any of that water."

During the 30 days water is discharged from the plant it will go into Prairie Dog Creek.

The Free Press began publishing water totals in its Thursday edition. The totals for Monday and Tuesday of this week were 2 million and 1.45 million gallons respectively.

For Thursday's water production total, refer to the weather information located elsewhere on the front page.

For questions about the water conservation plan, call the public works department at 462-4420.

Board opens building bids

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

A new administration building for the Colby School District is a step closer.

Bids were opened Monday afternoon and presented to the board of education at their Monday night meeting.

Colby architect Glen Strait was on hand at the meeting to discuss the bids. The base bid for the project is for the external portion of the structure, such as walls, exterior doors and windows, roof, masonry work, utility extensions, handicap ramps, and site work. Along with the base bid was an option which included interior work, such as walls and partitions bathroom fixtures, ceilings, and doors and framework.

Strait said between the base bid and option one, the only thing not included would be the floor covering and wall treatments. The mechanical and electrical work was also bid out separately.

Four contractors submitted bids for the general construction: Deines Construction of WaKeeney, Rhoads Construction of Goodland and Stephens Construction and Woofter Construction, both of Colby.

• Deines bid \$225,800 for the base bid and \$55,800 for option one. The complete bid for both is \$281,600.

• Rhoads bid \$228,600 for the base bid and \$66,400 for option one. Their total bid was \$295,000.

• Stephens bid \$223,416.48 for

the base bid \$66,290.32 for option one, for a total of \$289,706.80.

• Woofter bid \$239,618 for the base and \$60,716 for option one. Their total bid was \$300,334.00.

Superintendent Kirk Nielsen had suggested that if the base work was completed, the options could be completed by the maintenance department of the school. Strait told the board if a base bid was selected by one contractor, the option one could not be completed by another.

For bids on the mechanical construction, McKee Inc. of Colby and Plumbing Plus of WaKeeney, both submitted bids. McKee bid \$59,763 while Plumbing Plus bid \$60,980.

In the electrical department, Don's Electric and Jim's Electric, both of Colby, submitted bids of \$26,910 and \$28,325, respectively.

Strait said all bids were good for 30 days.

The board discussed the bids and were informed by Jo DeYoung, business manager for Colby Public Schools, that there is \$598,000 in the capital outlay fund and there should be another \$8,000 to \$10,000 by June 30. DeYoung also informed the board of new legislation that was passed allowing money to be transferred into the capital outlay fund.

No action was taken on the bids. Board member Kathy Gordon requested that members take the information home and review it and get more information about the new legislation before the next meeting on May 5.

Marijuana discovered in vehicle of speeder

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A 26-year-old Colby man was arrested earlier this week after a Colby police officer found about 1.25 pounds of marijuana in his car.

Nickalas Wayne Bley was initially stopped in his 2001 Chrysler PT Cruiser for speeding in the 400 block of S. Range Avenue at 4:08 a.m., Tuesday, said Gary Shull, Colby police investigator.

After stopping the speeder, the officer found the marijuana and additional baggies containing a white substance, Shull said.

Bley was then taken into custody that morning on charges of possession of marijuana with intent to sell, possession of a controlled sub-

stance, possession of drug paraphernalia and no tax stamp for sale of the drugs, Shull said.

"The PT Cruiser was also seized and Bley was notified of the state's Notice of Seizure of Forfeiture," he said. In other words, the seizure means that his car is permanently taken from him by authorities, Shull explained.

Bley was released on a \$10,000 bond and on Wednesday was charged in Thomas County District Court with possession of marijuana with intent to sell and possession of the drug paraphernalia.

"Even though Bley has been charged with a crime," Shull said, "he is still presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty."

Sharpton cancels Kansas visit

TOPEKA (AP) — The Rev. Al Sharpton, the New York civil rights activist and Democratic presidential hopeful, has canceled a planned visit to Topeka next week, his campaign spokesman said Thursday night.

Sharpton had been scheduled to attend an April 26 reception at a Topeka restaurant, then attend church services and make a speech on the Statehouse steps on April 27.

"We're going to have to take a

raincheck," campaign spokesman Frank Watkins said.

Instead, Watkins said, Sharpton will attend a dinner with broadcasters in Washington, D.C.

Several other presidential candidates are also expected to attend.

Sharpton's visit was scheduled to coincide with a celebration marking the 21st anniversary of the naming a portion of Interstate 70 highway in memory of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Briefly

Forensics team plans open house

The Colby High School Forensics Team is having an open house at 7 p.m., Monday, in the Colby High School auditorium. The event, said Nancy Rundel, coach, is designed to give everyone an opportunity to see what forensics is all about.

Refreshments will be served. For questions, call 465-5300.

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, 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.

For questions call Bredemeier at 462-3817 or the Thomas County Extension Office at 462-4582.

EMS plans 'mock' emergency

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services has planned a "mock" drunk driving demonstration on Wednesday beginning at 1:30 p.m. in the Colby High School parking lot. The purpose of the demonstration is to raise awareness among high school students planning to participate in prom activities and the dangers involved in drinking and driving, EMS officials said. Organizers also wanted to make sure people driving by during the event know this is only a demonstration and not a real emergency. For questions, call 462-4585.

Barbershop concert Saturday

The Tumbleweed Chorus will hold their annual concert on Saturday — at 3 p.m. 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.

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.

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.

