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Fleet passes test Vehicles ready to roll

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Every year, school districts across the state must pass a vehicle inspection by the Kansas Highway Patrol.

Alan Wade, transportation supervisor of the Colby school district, said the bus inspection for Colby schools took place on Aug. 18.

Thirteen route buses, two activity buses, one handicap accessible bus and 18 Suburbans passed the inspection. "Everything was fine," he said. "We passed with flying colors."

Wade, a highway patrolman and two helpers completed the entire process in about two and a half hours, he said.

They checked tires, lights, fire extinguishers, escape windows and doors, window wipers, first aid kits, body fluid clean-up kits, mirrors, wheels, exhaust systems — every safety-related item in and on the vehicles.

"We check just about everything you can imagine," Wade said. "We gave it the twice-over."

He said they got everything done fairly quickly because he did the paperwork in advance, which helped save time.

"It went great," said Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen. "We have very few violations, if any. They do a good job getting the buses ready in the summertime."

He said he also thinks the patrolmen who do the inspection appreciate the fact the Colby transportation staff prepares ahead of time.

Brewster schools Transportation Supervisor Ron Ribordy said they inspected their six vehicles on Aug. 14. He said it didn't take long to complete the inspection and everything went well.

Gary Hibbs, transportation director at Golden Plains High School in Rexford, said their inspection of six buses and three Suburbans was "just real good."

"I was real pleased," he said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby school district bus driver Cindy Black washed one of the district's Suburbans this morning. Earlier this month, district trans-

portation director Alan Wade, two helpers and a patrolman from the Kansas Highway Patrol inspected the fleet.

Citizens Medical Center gains critical access status

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby hospital's application to become a critical access facility was approved earlier this week allowing more flexibility with federal rules and regulations and a higher level of payments from the Medicare program, officials said.

Citizens Medical Center, Inc. was notified by the state that is was designated a critical access hospi-

tal, said Tama Unger, with public relations, and administrative officials are positive about the change.

"We are pleased that we have been granted critical access status," said Kevan Trenkle, interim chief executive officer at the hospital. "The increased flexibility and higher level of Medicare payments will allow our hospital to continue providing high quality, affordable health care services in Colby."

The initial decision to apply for this status was in June of this year, Unger said.

Vern Schwanke, chairman of the board, said this week that he too was glad the Colby facility was approved.

"Becoming a critical access hospital ensures that Thomas County will have its health care needs met," he said. "Our community can continue to rely on Citizens Medical

Center, Inc., as they always have."

Schwanke said with this new status, the hospital will be able to enhance its services as the reimbursement rate will be higher and profit margins will be greater.

He also said patients will not notice any changes at Citizens Medical Center now that the facility is a critical access hospital.

"In fact," he said, "we may even see additional services being added

because higher reimbursement will allow us to do so."

The state's decision to allow Colby's hospital to have critical access status came from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Unger said.

Officials at Citizens Medical Center encourage anyone with questions or needing additional information to call the administration office at (785) 462-7511.



Cloudy, cool, damp

Tonight...Cloudy with a chance of showers and thunderstorms. Areas of fog. Lows in the lower 50s. East wind 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent.

Saturday...Cloudy with a chance of showers and thunderstorms. Areas of fog. Cooler with highs in the mid 60s. Northeast wind around 15 mph. Chance of rain 30 percent.

Saturday night...Mostly cloudy with a chance of showers and thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 50s. Chance of rain 30 percent.

Sunday...Partly sunny with a slight chance of showers and thunderstorms. Highs in the lower 70s. Chance of rain 20 percent.

Sunday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 50s.

Labor Day...Partly cloudy. A chance of showers and thunderstorms in the afternoon and evening. Highs in the lower 80s.

Tuesday...Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 50s and highs in the lower 80s.

Wednesday...Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 50s and highs in the mid 80s.

Thursday...Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 50s and highs in the upper 80s.

By the numbers
Thursday's high, 81
Low this morning, 63
Records for the date, 102 in 1947 and 41 in 1976
Year ago today, 85 and 612
24-hour precipitation to 8 a.m. today, trace
Month's precipitation, 2.69 (includes 0.17 received on Thursday)
Year's precipitation to date, 13.98
2002's precipitation to date, 8.78

Water Usage/Colby
Aug. 28 = 2.045 million gallons

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other figures are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby and the Colby Public Works Department..

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners were updated on some maintenance issues that need to be taken care of at the fairgrounds race track at their end-of-month meeting this morning.

Fair board members Marty Crampton and Kerry Wark gave the presentation.

Wark said the track needs a new

drainage pit at the west end of the infield. The dirt that will be dug out for a pit will be used to address another issue at the track, he said.

"Over the years the track has got more of a cut in it," Wark said.

"That top groove's so much better than the bottom."

A groove has been worn at the bottom of the track and the dirt from the new drainage pond will be used to fill in the bottom groove, he said.

Clair Schrock from the county road department will help with the work at the track.

Commissioner Ron Evans said the county would offer what help it could and said that he is in favor of helping them out. "We're all in this together."

He also recommended they look into getting a yellow caution light for turns two and four at the track.

Wark said it was something that's

been considered.

"We discussed that a few years ago," he said. "If we could find a couple putting them up would be no trouble. It certainly wouldn't hurt anything."

In other business, the commissioners discussed and took action on pickup bids for the road department.

Tubbs and Sons Ford and Frontier Autoplex both submitted sealed

bids to the county.

Tubbs' was for a 2004 half-ton extended cab Ford for \$32,125 with a trade in value of \$12,024 on the department's 1999 truck they would like to trade in.

The Frontier bid was \$31,844 for a 2004 half-ton extended cab Chevy truck with \$12,184 trade in. The Frontier bid was approved.

The board will next meet at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 2.

Two boards to meet

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will meet next Tuesday at 5 p.m.

This is a change due to the Monday Labor Day holiday colliding with the board's usual meeting day.

Items on the agenda include the policies and procedures manual, contract approvals, approval of agreements, insurance coverage, capital outlay and other items members may want to discuss.

The meeting will be held in the board room of the administration building and is open to the public.

The Colby Board of Education is expected to either approve or deny bids for the middle school lighting project made available by an energy

grant when it meets Tuesday night. The lighting project was one of many issues discussed during the board's recent tour of facilities.

Other items include emergency substitute license request and out-of-district field trip requests.

Superintendent Kirk Nielsen also reminds residents that all district facilities have switched to the "460" prefix.

The grade school telephone number is now 460-5100; middle school, 460-5200; and high school, 460-5300.

The board meeting will be at the administration building, 210 S. Range.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. and is open to the public.

Tribe opens casino in Kansas City

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — After years of controversy, the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma quietly opened a casino Thursday on its land in downtown Kansas City, Kan., but the dispute may not be over.

Although the tribe did not officially announce the opening, a line had formed outside the new Wyandotte 7th Street Casino before it opened at 9 a.m. and it was nearly full in the hours after it opened.

The cramped casino, in a renovated Masonic Lodge building, offers about 150 bingo, "pull tab" games and a variety of electronic

pull tab devices that look and play like slot machines. It's in the middle of downtown, across the street from the City Hall and next to the tribe's historic Huron Cemetery, established in the 1840s.

The casino includes a small bar, but a dispute quickly arose over whether the tribe was allowed to serve alcohol. And the tribe's attorney acknowledged the Wyandotte Nation would prefer to open a casino at a more spacious site in the county.

The tribe for years has threatened to open a downtown casino as leverage to force approval of its preferred plan for a larger-scale casino and

resort at a site near Kansas Speedway in Wyandotte County.

"We have a piece of land and we are conducting gaming today," said David McCullough, the tribe's attorney. "There would be better places to be, but this is it for now. The tribe would always be interested in negotiations to move elsewhere in the county."

The federal Interior Department ruled earlier the tribe's downtown land was eligible for federally licensed Class II gambling activities, which includes only certain games such as bingo and pull tabs. A Class II permit doesn't require further approvals.

Briefly

Courthouse closed for Labor Day

The Thomas County Courthouse will be closed on Monday in observance of Labor Day. Normal operations will resume Tuesday morning.

Job Service to stay open at noon

The Colby Work Force office (formerly known as Job Service) at 485 N. Chick is staying open during the lunch hour. Linda Groff, local supervisor, said the change will go into effect on Wednesday, Sept. 3 and is expected to be a permanent situation. For questions or information about how the Colby Work Force office can help people find jobs, call the office at (785) 462-6862.

School activities noted

Colby School activities for next week include: **Monday, Sept. 1** — Labor Day, no school. **Tuesday, Sept. 2** — School

Board meeting at 7 p.m. (Sports-related briefs can be found in "SportsLine" on page 12 today).

'Worker Auction' planned at Brewster

BREWSTER — The high school and junior high vocal groups at Brewster will be holding a fund raiser on Friday, Sept. 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the football field. Called "Worker Auction" students will work four hours and the work must be completed by Nov. 1.

Call Alice Collett at (785) 694-2236 for additional information.

No Free Press on Monday

The *Colby Free Press* will not publish on Monday — Labor Day. "We will all be enjoying the holiday with family and friends," said Tom (TD) Dreiling, publisher. "We encourage our readers to simply relax on this, the final holiday of the summer season.," he said. The *Free Press* will resume normal operations at 8 a.m. on Tuesday.

Landfill hours are noted

The Thomas County Landfill will close at noon on Saturday for scale repair and maintenance, said Larry Jumper, supervisor. The landfill will also be closed Sunday and Monday for the Labor Day holiday.

Commodity distribution Tuesday

There will be a United States Department of Agriculture commodity distribution on Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon at the Colby Senior Progress Center, Fike Park. Eligible persons may receive them according to income guidelines. Distribution is on a first come-first serviced basis.

Childbirth classes planned

Colby Childbirth Education classes will begin on Thursday, Sept. 4 from 7 to 10 p.m. This is a four-week series and is held at Colby Community College in the Health Science Building. Call Amy Hutfles at 460-4344 if you need additional information. .

