

Weather Corner



Tonight... Mostly cloudy. Chance of thunderstorms. Patchy fog after midnight. Lows in the mid 40s. East winds 10 to 15 mph shifting to the northeast after midnight. Gusts up to 30 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent. **Friday...** Patchy fog in the morning. Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 60s to near 70. North winds 10 to 15 mph with gusts to 30 mph. **Friday night...** Partly cloudy. Lows in the 40s. Northwest winds 5 to 15 mph. **Saturday...** Partly cloudy. Highs around 70. North winds 5 to 15 mph. **Looking ahead...** Saturday and Sunday in the 70s, Monday and Tuesday in the 80s.

The numbers
Wednesday's high, 84
Low this morning, 36
Records for this date, 99 in 1962 and 27 in 1953
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
Precipitation for month to date: 0.22
Soil temperature, 68
A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

State Items

Senators to repay improper tax break

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sens. Kit Bond and Sam Brownback said Wednesday that they plan to repay tax breaks they improperly received on their homes in the nation's capitol. The lawmakers say they unwittingly benefited from a Washington, D.C., property tax law — known as the homestead deduction — even though they did not qualify.

The tax breaks, first reported this week by *The Kansas City Star*, are meant to cover only homeowners who make Washington, D.C., their primary residence. Members of Congress generally live in the states they represent.

Under the law, homeowners can reduce the tax-assessed value of their property by \$38,000 and cap annual assessment increases at 12 percent.

In Brownback's case, the Kansas Republican never applied for the tax break.

The senator's office released a letter from a city official, which says the Office of Tax and Revenue mistakenly applied the deduction that was given to the previous owner of Brownback's condominium.

Brownback plans to repay \$667 when he receives a revised tax bill from the city, said spokesman Brian Hart.

He received the tax break on the one-bedroom condominium he purchased in 2003 for \$299,000.

Hearing expenses outrage attorney

TOPEKA (AP) — He doesn't think he'll persuade the State Board of Education to keep evolution-friendly science standards, but a Topeka attorney still is trying to make a case for them.

A board subcommittee was to wrap up hearings today on how evolution should be taught in public schools.

The entire board plans to consider proposed changes by August.

Pedro Irigonegaray, a Topeka attorney defending proposed standards that would continue to describe evolution as a key concept for students to learn, said Wednesday that the hearings were "simply an outrage."

"The people of the state of Kansas should be outraged by what's happened here and the waste of money that this represents," Irigonegaray said.

The hearings are expected to cost the board at least \$17,000, a figure that includes \$5,000 to cover some expenses for witnesses.

Briefly

Annual carrier food drive Saturday

Letter carriers at the Colby Post Office will be collecting food Saturday as part of their annual letter carrier food drive. They will be collecting non-perishable food items which can be left in mail boxes or where it can be picked up. For more information, call 460-7904.

Reception Friday at college

A public reception honoring seven long-time Colby Community College employees who will be retiring at the end of the spring semester will be held on Friday beginning at 3 p.m. in the Student Union, room 108. The honorees include Gracemary Melvin, Dr. Harlan Thyfault, Vernon Wranosky, Doris Anderson, Wanda Davis, Fred Miller and Tommy Dean.

Chamber luncheon last of season

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce will hold its last luncheon until the fall at noon, Friday. The program is entitled, "Yesterday and Today," with Danielle Free-

man, director of the Thomas County Foundation, the guest speaker. The luncheon will be held at the Prairie Rose Restaurant at Quality Inn and is open to all chamber members, employees and their guests. For questions, call 460-3401.

Oldest living 4-H member sought

The Thomas County Fair Board is looking for the oldest living 4-H member in Thomas County to serve as the grand marshall at this year's parade, said Audrey Hines, board secretary. The search for the oldest 4-H member is in conjunction with a recent contest held in Thomas County schools to choose a theme for the parade. The winning entry, "Celebrating 100 years of 4-H" came from the Brewster fifth grade class, she said. Hines is encouraging people to call her at 462-2388 or Stan Strange at 462-8331 with names of possibly the oldest living 4-H members.

Scout troops collecting old flags

Colby Girl Scout Troops 165 and 132 are again collecting

old, faded, torn, or otherwise out of repair U.S. flags for proper disposal, said Kathy Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer, project coordinator. Flags can be dropped off until Friday at the Colby Municipal Airport or at the collection box in the lobby of Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th St. "U.S. Flag etiquette calls for the flag to be flown in good order," she said. Flags that are torn can be repaired, however the flag should remain rectangular in appearance, Ostmeyer said. "Flags that are torn beyond repair and flags that are faded to an extent that the colors do not appear red, white, and blue should be properly disposed of," she said.

Application deadline nearing

Kansas Farm Bureau will once again honor Century Farms in Kansas. Applicants must be members of Farm Bureau. The land must have been in the family for 100 years by Dec. 31, 2005. At least 80 acres of the original Kansas farm must still be in the family. Applications are due in to the Thomas County Farm Bureau office by Friday, May 13. Please call the office for an application or find them online at <http://www.kfb.org>. Call 460-6332 with any questions.

Logan County moving ahead with pageant

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

OAKLEY — Last month's announcement that a national scholarship pageant will be discontinued, won't keep Logan County from having a pageant of its own next month.

"Our hands are pretty much up in the air, but we plan to do something. We just don't know what we'll do," said Jodee Rummel, local chairperson of the soon to be defunct America's Junior Miss program.

The Mobile, Ala. based pageant program lost major corporate sponsorship and television news coverage and the board of directors last month called it quits. A 48-year-old program has had more than 700,000 young women participate for the

over \$87.7 million dollars in cash scholarship awards. The America's Junior Miss organization will air its last event at the end of June and close shop June 30.

Despite the national program ending, Rummel said a scholarship pageant is being planned for June 11 in Oakley.

Eleven area teenage girls will participate — 10 from Oakley and one from Grinnell — for nearly \$2,000 in scholarship money.

Rummel said she has contacted the national Junior Miss organization and learned a local pageant can take place under certain guidelines.

"We can't use the Junior Miss program rules or its name, but we are going to continue," she said.

Adrienne Molstad, 17, was

crowned Logan County Junior Miss 2005, and went on to win first runner-up at the state pageant in Bellville on March 19.

Molstad hopes the national program will be reorganized.

"I am upset about the national program ending. Actually, when I heard about it I talked to many of the Junior Miss girls and they are upset too.

At Belleville I heard Coca-Cola was dropping out as a sponsor, but I didn't know the program would end. Hopefully Pepsi or another company will pick it up and keep the pageant running," she said.

A 2005 graduate of Oakley High School, Molstad will use the over \$4,000 earned in scholarship money to continue her education at

Kansas State University this fall.

Molstad is thankful for the local sponsorship and support offered her in her successful bid for the crown and she hopes that support continues.

"I don't know if people understand the impact the program plays in girls' lives, especially here in Logan County," she said.

One pageant which won't take place this summer is the one in Sheridan County.

Haley Heim, chairman of the local Junior Miss program there, said there just wasn't enough time to put together a non-sanctioned event this year. And, she said despite having had three young women show interest in the pageant, she does not anticipate Sheridan County's future

having a reorganized program.

"We felt with all the changes we'd have to make we wouldn't have it any more," Heim said.

Sheridan County's 2005 Junior Miss is Allison Mense. While she advanced to the state contest at Belleville, she did not earn a title there, but is sad about the program's end.

"I think it's really sad because it gives girls a chance to gain confidence in themselves and earn scholarship money. Girls who participated had an opportunity to be confident and meet new friends," she said.

"It's also sad because Sheridan County had a great program and we had a lot of people who helped with it."

Justices still skeptical about school funding proposal

TOPEKA (AP) — Having heard three hours of arguments — and offering its own measure of criticism — the Kansas Supreme Court now must consider whether the Legislature has done enough to improve school funding and keep the state out of court.

At least one justice was concerned Wednesday that the Legislature won't follow through on its plan to boost school funding by \$142 million and fulfill promises to adjust spending in the future to meet the needs of all students, causing more legal battles.

"This could be a retirement plan for the plaintiffs' attorney," said Justice Lawton Nuss.

His fellow justices sounded skeptical about the Legislature's plan, and it faced criticism from attorneys for the State Board of Education and school districts suing the state.

Alan Rupe, a Wichita attorney representing parents and administrators in the Dodge City and Salina school districts, told the justices they should reject the plan and tell legislators to fix it by mid-June,

before the next school year starts. Asked by Chief Justice Kay McFarland whether such a ruling would be realistic, Rupe said legislators have the information that would permit them to act quickly.

The justices gave no indication when they may issue a ruling.

Dan Biles, an Overland Park representing the state board, said the Legislature's work clearly wasn't based on educational costs. He said the court must consider whether the legislators' plan is sufficient to end legal challenges over education funding, adding, "I don't think we can make that case."

Biles said timing of the ruling was critical, with the next school term starting in about 100 days. Districts are setting their budgets and need to know with certainty how much money will be available. "You're not going to be able to have a special session and have school in August," said Biles.

Justices have shown an inclination to be deliberate, taking more than four months between an Aug. 30 hearing and a Jan. 3 ruling. That

decision required the Legislature to increase spending beyond its present \$2.7 billion and to distribute the money more fairly. The court also told legislators to base spending on actual educational costs.

Rupe said the Legislature's plan was the same kind of inadequate response from legislators that caused his clients to sue the state in 1999. Rupe has suggested the state might need to spend between \$800 million and \$1 billion more annually.

"If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got," Rupe said. "What the Legislature did was engage in politics as usual."

Kenneth Weltz, an Overland Park attorney representing the state, said legislators met the requirements of the court's January ruling, adding, "This legislation should end this litigation."

But justices immediately questioned whether legislators had studied the actual costs of an education. Several sounded skeptical.

"What actual costs did the Legislature look at?" Justice Donald Allegrucci asked. "I see none referred to."

Weltz acknowledged that legislators had only limited cost information to consider.

Allegrucci noted that the Department of Education surveyed 55 school districts about their costs. Legislators largely ignored the data, which suggested an annual increase in spending of about \$600 million would be necessary.

Weltz said: "I call that a survey without any scientific foundation for its evidence."

Legislators' plan relies on existing state revenues and allowing school districts to increase their spending through higher local property taxes.

Future state increases would be tied to inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index.

After the hearing, Attorney General Phill Kline expressed reservations about the possibility that the

court could appoint a special master to oversee the drafting of a new funding plan. Such a step, he said, would create a "benevolent dictatorship" over education policy.

Legislators who attended the hearing said they could have answered the justices' questions about how decisions were made on the funding package and how future cost studies will be used.

Rep. Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, noted that the new funding plan requires a study to give lawmakers a better idea of what schools are spending and what their needs are.

He said legislative staff is capable of analyzing that information.

"All we ask for is a study that does what we ask for," O'Neal said.

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MEETING NOTICE

Thomas County Democratic Party

May 17, 2005 - 7:00 P.M.

Room 106

Student Union - Colby Community College

YOU ARE WELCOME

Advertisement paid for by Rosalie Seemann.

fourth in halter and sixth overall.

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Graduation Open House

Reception to honour Kelsey Dunn

Sunday, May 15th Following Graduation

Approximately 5:00-8:00

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Come & Go

Bridal Registry

Lacey Atkins & Rory Henry
Shower April 30, 2005
Wedding May 27, 2005

Rebecca Steward & Joe Vyzourek
Wedding July 16, 2005

Mollie Rumback & Bryan Kough
Wedding July 23, 2005

OFFICE WORKS & Furnishings

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SLAVENS FAMILY PRACTICE

Dr. Gary Slavens

New office located at Citizens Medical Center

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- ◆ Board Eligible Family Practice
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