

Weather Corner



Gradual return to the 90s

Tonight...Partly cloudy. A 40 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 60s. South winds 10 to 20 mph.

Wednesday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 80s. Southeast winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the east 10 to 15 mph in the afternoon. Gusts up to 30 mph in the late morning and afternoon.

Wednesday night...Partly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the mid 60s. East winds 5 to 15 mph.

Thursday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 90s. Southeast winds 5 to 15 mph.

Friday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 90s.

The numbers

Monday's high, 84

Low this morning, 53

Records for this date, 106 in 1911 and 46 in 1931

Precipitation July 1-4, 1.42

Month's precipitation, 1.42

Water use 7-1 to 7-3 = 2,164,500 average gallons per day

Water use 7-4 = 1,824,200 gallons

Soil temperature, 79

The sources:

A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

State Items

Giant tree takes another big beating

Once state's largest may be nearing end

OZAWKIE (AP) — A cottonwood tree that for years had been admired as the largest in the state has taken a beating lately from Mother Nature.

The tree in Cottonwood Tree Park near Ozawkie had been recognized as the largest eastern cottonwood specimen in the state from 1980 until 2002.

But a Sheridan County tree's growth, and storm damage to the tree here in Jefferson County have brought hard times for a beloved cottonwood.

A recent windstorm knocked down a 40-foot section of one of the tree's three trunk stems. That followed another storm a year ago that felled the tree's tallest trunk section — a loss of around 14 feet in height.

"It really could be viewed as the kiss of death that cost the tree its standing, both literally and figuratively," said Kansas State University district forester Jim Strine, who for more than 25 years has been keeper of the Champion Trees of Kansas list, which identifies the largest of more than 100 specimens in the state.

Champion trees are determined by a combination of three measurements, Strine explains: the circumference of the tree's trunk at the base, height from the base of the trunk to the highest branch, and crown spread — the distance from the tips of branches on one side of the tree to the tips of branches on the other.

Strine had not yet inspected the latest damage to the tree. But based on his examination of it last year and news of further damage he said it may be nearing the end of its life.

"The parts of the tree's trunk that were exposed by the loss of that major limb last summer didn't look real good," Strine said. "There's lots of soft spots and decay."

Despite that, the tree remains a source of pride at Cottonwood Tree Park, where a sign designating its former "champion" status as the biggest of its kind in Kansas, remains on display.

Briefly

Board to hold special meeting

The Colby School Board will hold a special board meeting at 7 a.m. Thursday at the Administration Building, 600 W. Third. The purpose of the meeting is to swear in a new board member and accept or reject technology bids.

Puppeteer show Saturday

In conjunction with the summer reading program at Pioneer Memorial Library, Priscilla Howe will be in Colby to present a puppeteer show entitled, *Dragons Galore...and More*, starting at 1:30 p.m., Saturday, at Fike Park. There will be a watermelon feed and Larry Booth of Colby will entertain at 1:15 p.m. and prior to the puppeteers. For questions, call Judy Kleinsorge, children's librarian, 460-4470.

Van available to public

The Thomas County transit van is available to all people in Colby and Thomas County, said Shelly Harms, county clerk. The transit van operates from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mon-

day through Friday. For those wanting to use the van, call 460-2901 for access.

'Picnic In the Park' is Thursday

"Picnic in the Park" continues every Thursday in July, said Mary Ann Downing, executive director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, sponsoring the event. Each week, starting at noon in Fike Park, different performers will entertain throughout the hour.

The McLemore Family, Colby, will provide this week's entertainment. "Bring your lawn chair and lunch and enjoy the music each week," Downing said. For questions, 460-3401.

Childbirth classes start Thursday

Childbirth Classes for July will be Thursday, July 14, 21 and Tuesday July 28. The four-week series will be held at the Health Science Building at Colby Community College from 7 to 10 p.m. For questions or to enroll, call Tina Schrick at 462-6845.

After 5 Club plans dinner party

The High Plains After 5 Club is inviting everyone to its "Fun At the Malt Shop" dinner party from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, July 12, at the Colonial Steakhouse in Oakley. Reservations and cancellations are due no later than Sunday, July 10, by calling either Gloria Mattix at (785) 460-2705 or e-mailing Teri Adams at: biohw@st-tel.net.

Genesis food drive to continue

Colby Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3882 Auxiliary will continue the Genesis food collection at LeRoy's Printing, 560 N. Franklin in Colby.

Chorus rehearses every Tuesday

The Hi-Plains Harmony Chorus of Sweet Adelines holds rehearsals every Tuesday at 7:30 pm. at the Colby United Methodist Church, 950 S. Franklin Ave. All female singers are encouraged to attend anytime. Larry Patterson of Norton is the director.

A question only GOP conservatives can answer

An AP News Analysis By JOHN HANNA

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — Are conservative Republicans deliberately trying to force the Kansas Supreme Court to keep public schools closed this fall?

That's a legitimate question for Kansans to ask while legislators take a Fourth of July holiday from a special session that has lasted 11 days and produced nothing to answer the court's order to provide additional money for schools.

Conservatives have helped engineer a situation where they claim to work desperately to keep schools open, even as they move the state closer to a crisis that could cut off the flow of money and keep

445,000 students and 64,000 staff out of classrooms this fall.

"At a minimum, I think they're attempting to create a constitutional crisis," said Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka. "To the extreme, they are forcing the court to close schools."

Conservatives, of course, are aghast at such an idea. Isn't it madness, they've asked, to force schools to remain closed in the name of giving children a better education?

Also, conservatives are pushing an amendment to the Kansas Constitution to prevent the court from closing schools.

"The No. 1 priority is to keep schools open," Attorney General Phill Kline said Saturday.

But consider that House conservatives are blocking the easiest path to avoiding a constitutional crisis: appropriating the additional \$143 million for schools demanded by the Kansas Supreme Court.

The idea of capitulation makes conservatives' voices rise, their faces flush and their sentences burst with references to tyranny.

Many moderates are sympathetic. They also believe the court went too far in telling legislators exactly how much money to appropriate and that spending decisions should be left to elected officials, not an appointed court.

"A basic principle of government is that the power of the purse rests with the legislative branch," said Senate Majority Leader Derek

Schmidt, R-Independence.

Furthermore, there's the very real specter of further court intervention. In the June 3 order that led to the special session, the Supreme Court said it could order a much bigger increase next year — perhaps \$568 million.

"Any separation of powers system is full of questions that should never be asked," Schmidt said. "But once one of those questions is asked, it has to be answered. The answer, at the end of the day, can come only from the people."

Conservatives insist that legislators must approve a constitutional amendment to limit judicial power if a school finance bill is to pass.

Democrats and moderate Republicans are preventing an amendment from getting the required two-thirds majority, or 84 of 125 votes.

They appear to oppose any amendment — because they think such a thing shouldn't be rushed or worry that it would upset the balance of power in state government.

"Our caucus went past 'hell no,'" about seven days ago," Rep. Bruce Larkin, D-Baileyville, said Saturday.

And besides pushing to amend the constitution, they've sought to add provisions to a school finance bill to punish school districts for suing the state.

Their favorite amendment would prevent the courts from ordering legislators to appropriate money or to redirect money that's already been appropriated.

Another proposal would declare that the courts couldn't cut off funds and keep schools closed.

The plaintiffs in the pending school finance litigation against the state include children and their parents, people who believe their education is compromised by how much money the state spends and how those dollars are appropriated.

By making separation of powers the issue, conservatives have made themselves the victims, not students who may not be getting the academic help they need.

And if conservatives succeeded in amending the constitution, it's unlikely that another school finance lawsuit — or a lawsuit over other parts of the budget — would see the plaintiffs obtain a remedy.

Conservatives believe voters are on their side in their dispute with the Kansas court. But to keep voters agitated, the threat has to be real.

And nothing gets more real than locking up schools and burning away days of a child's education.

Angry voters are more likely to approve constitutional changes. If their wrath is stoked long enough, they might kick the governor out of office and hand over the entire government to conservatives.

And that's what conservatives have wanted for a long time.



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

Paul Thorup (working on doorway) helped Chris Dorman install a new patio door at Dorman's home. Thorup came out of retirement to become a volunteer contractor who does not charge a set fee but relies on God to provide what he needs through donations from those he does work for.

God's carpenter has no set fee

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

OAKLEY — Finding out retirement wasn't all it was cracked up to be, an Olathe man has moved to Oakley to return to work.

Paul Thorup retired from a lifetime of carpentry, but after a year of traveling the country seeing family and friends, he decided to go back to work. But this time it's different, because he said he's now working for God, not himself.

"God's been really good to me. My dad, J. L. Thorup, was a master carpenter and he invented the slip for concrete silos construction and he was a Baptist minister so I was raised in church and I have a heritage in the construction business," Thorup said at a job site in Oakley.

After retiring from Kansas City-based Merit Construction, Thorup and his wife, Pat, traveled for a year in their fifth-wheel.

As Kansas' directors for Marriage Ministries International, last year they stopped in Oakley to conduct a Married for Life seminar.

Thorup said at one of the last meetings he told someone he needed to return to Olathe to find work because he was "running out of money from traveling."

"Pastor Jamie Bloom called me and asked me if I'd come and interview for the job as project manager for the Impact Center, so I did," Thorup said.

The Impact Center is a project undertaken by Oakley's Community Church last year. The center will have a regulation sized basketball and volleyball court and will accommodate seating capacity for about 1,000 people using on-court and off-court areas.

In addition, it will have two large projection screens and a high-quality sound system for concerts or meeting settings.

Having been selected for the project manager position, Thorup packed up the couple's fifth-wheel and moved to Oakley. There's one huge difference to Thorup's life now, because he doesn't set a price for his labor.

"The work I do now is done with me telling the people to pay me what it's worth to them and then God provides for me," he said.

Having worked in construction since 1958, Thorup said he's built homes, schools, shopping centers and all sorts of metal buildings.

"Of anything out there I've done it all except for a skyscraper," he said.

Having worked in Oakley on the Impact Center for the past several months, Thorup said the worst part about it is "being away from my family." But the couple plans to sell their home and move to Oakley as soon as their youngest daughter leaves home, because as Thorup said, "They love the community."

"The people in Oakley are the best people you can find. And I just love helping people whenever I can and I enjoy what God provides me."

"I need a point to my day. If I have a point to my day I'm up and eager and ready to go," he said as he installed a patio door for an Oakley resident.

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(available in trade area only)

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