



COLBY FREE PRESS

Red Cross needs you!

Fast track training could begin with as few as four people

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

The Thomas County Red Cross Chapter was given the “green light” Wednesday to begin a fast track training program designed to recruit volunteers to help hurricane victims in New Orleans.

Word from the regional headquarters located in Des Moines, Iowa, was that “new” recruits and volunteers will be needed in about two weeks.

“As soon as I have four people willing to go,” said Molly Oliver, Thomas County Red Cross disaster chair, “I can begin the training.”

The only requirements are that volunteers be 18 or older and in good health, she said.

Once she has at least four volunteers lined up, the next step would be in setting up the classes and courses.

The fast track program would take two evenings, she said.

“I think I could get mass care and introduction to disaster course work done in one evening (about four to five hours) and shelter operations in another evening (about 4—6 hours),” she said.

Volunteers would then need to apply as a volunteer, get approved and receive a

quick overview of what will be expected from them.

“The Red Cross will fly volunteers wherever they need them at no expense to the person,” she said.

“Since someone is a volunteer, there is no pay, but all meals and accommodations are covered by the Red Cross.”

Molly’s husband, Jim Oliver, left Sunday with Frank Powers from Gove County in the Thomas County Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV).

“We got a call at 1 p.m. last Sunday from the Red Cross saying they needed the ERV and two volunteers now,” she said.

Within six hours, Jim and Powers were on the road.

Of the 267 emergency response vehicles owned by Red Cross, 187 of them have been deployed to the Gulf coast.

“Basically the key things needed right now include money donations, volunteers and blood donations,” Oliver said.

“Clothes, food, hygiene packets and more will be needed in the coming weeks and months, but for now the priority continues to be money, volunteers and blood,” she said.

Oliver said this is a great opportunity to help and with the fast training, volunteers

can get over more quickly.

Another important factor is that the Red Cross will not let anyone go anywhere that is not safe, she said.

“No amount of money that you can put in the bank will give you the same rate of return as helping someone,” she said. “Please help.”

If interested in the fast track training, call Oliver at 462-6133; donations can either be dropped off at the chapter’s office, 350 S. Range Ave., or by speaking with Roger Herron, 462-7161.

Donations may also be made online: www.redcross.org.

Gas prices rising

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A stop at the pump is causing sticker shock for anyone who wants to gas up. As of noon today, gas prices were holding steady. The average price was \$2.99, with that being the price at Love’s Country Store, Kabredlo’s, J&J Oil, the Oasis Travel Center and Dillon’s.

The lowest gas to be found in town was at the Stop 2 Shop, with gas at \$2.98. The high spots were at the BP 24/7 and Conoco Phillips at \$3.09 a gallon.

And consumers can expect prices to keep going up at least through the weekend.

Jennifer Love Meyer, public relations director with Love’s Country Stores in Oklahoma City, said the Hurricane Katrina has not helped already high gas prices.

“Something like this is totally unplanned an unexpected,” she said.

“Hugely increasing costs” have affected how they price gas, and Love Meyer said they are trying their best. She said supply and demand affects price and increased demand with halted production is affecting how much they have to pay for fuel. As an independent company, they have to buy from suppliers and then resell gas.

She said refinement capabilities in the Gulf of Mexico have



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Gas prices at most Colby locations were hovering just under \$3 at noon today. The average was \$2.99. Gas prices nationwide have risen sharply in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

been affected by the hurricane and power outages that have followed, adding they buy their gas from three or four different sources based on availability and price.

“This has created nationwide havoc,” Love Meyer said.

They’re trying to contain their costs as much as possible. Consumers can check Love’s gas prices at the pump on their Web site, www.loves.com. She cautioned the prices do vary nationwide and said they also need to be aware of when

the site is updated.

“We hope prices go down,” she said.

Another option for people online is www.gasbuddy.com, which shows realtime gas prices at the local level.

Electric crews from Colby area deployed south

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Local and area crews from Midwest Energy are on their way to help hurricane victims in the Gulf region.

Eighteen linemen will leave Hays on Friday and head to Mississippi to help with reconstruction of that state’s electric system.

“The crews will stay and provide restoration efforts for up to several weeks,” said Dennis O’Dell, Manager of Operations for Midwest Energy.

“We are very proud of these employees who volunteered to leave family and friends and help those in need in Mississippi. Our crews certainly know they’re going into an area that was devastated and will be working long, hard hours to get the system up and operating again.”

Six linemen from the Colby and Hoxie area, six linemen from the Great Bend, Hanston and Lyons area and six linemen from the Hays and WaKeeney area are leaving Friday, driving 12 vehicles to the

area. The vehicles include bucket trucks, digger derricks and pickups.

The Midwest Energy crews will be assisting Coast Electric Power Association, which has offices in Bay St. Louis and Biloxi, Mississippi.

The cooperative serves 63,000 customers over 4,900 miles of line, and is located in one of the worst hit areas.

Crew members estimate they have 30,000 electric poles down and are still trying to locate 50 to 60 of their employees.

The Midwest Energy effort is part of a larger effort provided by Electric Cooperatives from across the United States.

The crews are expected to stay at and work out of temporary housing and will be taking their own supplies of water and fuel.

The linemen will leave from the Hays corporate office at 8 a.m. Friday, and are expected to arrive in Bay St. Louis, Miss. on Sunday morning after traveling over 1,100 miles to the area.

Logan County takes action to conserve gas

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

OAKLEY—Logan County commissioners want fuel consumption limited by staff and crews.

Commissioners Carl Ulrich, Doug Mackley and Nick Scott on Wednesday issued a memo to county staff members and crews to limit their use of gas.

“With the extreme increase in fuel prices and utility costs and the uncertainty of their future costs,” the memo says, “the board is asking for your help in conserving and cutting back where possible within your departments.”

Staff members and crews are being asked to do without or borrow from another department whenever possible.

“If you can find it cheaper somewhere else, buy it there. If you don’t have to attend a meeting, stay in the office. If you can share a ride with other counties or departments, do so,” the commissioners said.

In addition, staff members and crews are being asked to conduct business over the phone or by facsimile whenever possible.

“Our budgets were not designed to afford these incredibly high fuel prices so please conserve mileage whenever possible,” they said. “Together we can make a difference.”

Logan County Clerk Pat Schippers said the commissioner thought it necessary to issue the memo because gasoline in Oakley had reached the \$3 per gallon mark.

“Our budgets were not designed to afford these incredibly high fuel prices so please conserve mileage.”

Logan County Commissioners

“After reviewing the bills, there were fuel bills from the sheriff’s office, emergency management and health departments that probably made them start thinking about it,” Schippers said. “In discussing the news of the day and realizing gas in Oakley was \$3 dollar plus per gallon, they discussed that they anticipated budget problems if departments didn’t start cutting back now because we certainly didn’t budget for \$3.00 gas.”

Schippers said the commissioners are trying to head off end of year problems with the budget.

“One of the commissioners asked the questions in their discussion about what would happen if a certain department ran out of money in their budget say in December,” Schippers said. “Would we have to shut the department down? No, one had an answer other than hoping this didn’t happen.”

Street life can be dangerous for wildlife

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

If not for the kindness of one Colby man, a baby snapping turtle might have been run over.

John McDermott said he saw the little turtle at Pine and Franklin Avenue crossing the street at about 1:30 p.m., Wednesday.

“I got him some scraps from J & B Meat Market for him to eat,” McDermott said, “and then I turned him loose.”

McDermott, who is originally from Atwood, said he has seen a lot of snapping turtles and some as big as two feet in diameter. The snapper he rescued probably wandered to far from water and without some help wouldn’t have survived.

“These are water turtles, not land,” he said. “I was watching a documentary the other night and these turtles have a biting power of 1,000 pounds and can live up to 150 years old.” The baby snapper’s relocation site was not released, but McDermott hopes the turtle will stand a better chance than life on the streets.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

John McDermott of Colby showed off the snapping turtle he found just before letting it go later on Wednesday afternoon.

