

Weather
Corner



Warm start to winter

The forecast
Tonight — Partly cloudy with a low around 33. West wind between 5 and 15 mph. **Friday** — Partly cloudy with a high around 60. Breezy, with a west wind 5 to 10 mph increasing to between 15 and 20 mph. Winds could gust as high as 35 mph.
Friday night — Partly cloudy with low near 31. Windy with a north wind between 25 and 30 mph, with gusts as high as 40 mph.
Saturday — Partly cloudy with a high around 53. Windy with a north wind between 20 and 30 mph with gusts as high as 45 mph.
Saturday night — Mostly clear with a low around 25.
Christmas Day — Mostly sunny with a high near 59.
Sunday night — Mostly clear with a low around 26.
Monday — Mostly sunny with a high around 58.
Monday night — Mostly clear with a low near 26.
Tuesday — Mostly sunny with a high around 54.
Temperatures
Wednesday's high, 57
Low this morning, 28
Records for this date, 69 in 1933, 032 in 1989
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.0
December's precipitation, 0.08
A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

Briefly

City to close during funeral
All city offices will be closed from 2 to 4 p.m., Friday, so employees can attend the funeral of Tab Stupka, 47, a fellow city employee who died Tuesday afternoon. Services will be held 2:30 p.m., Friday, at Harrison Chapel in Colby. See page 4 in today's edition for other service details.

'Scrooge' planned Saturday
The Living Word Fellowship in Hoxie is presenting "Scrooge," live starting at 7 p.m., Saturday. The facility is located one-quarter mile west of Hoxie on Highway 24. In addition, homemade cookies and hot chocolate will be served. Admission is free-will donation. For questions, call Rev. Dan Rohm, (785) 675-3004 or 675-3174.

Pizza fundraiser rescheduled
Organizers of the Colby High School wrestling squad's pizza fundraiser had planned to deliver pizza orders today. However, due to inventory technicalities, the pizza delivery is being rescheduled for Friday, Dec. 30, said Denise Garcia, one of the coordinators. "We apologize for being unable to make the scheduled delivery date and hope this doesn't cause too many problems for those who ordered," she said. For questions, call Garcia at 460-0053 or 462-2444

or Mitch Beims, wrestling head coach, 460-7631.
January dance cancelled
The Friday, Jan. 6, Singles Dance was cancelled due to the extremely cold weather, said Carolyn Miller, one of the organizers. The February dance is still planned.

Transit van for Colby residents only
The Thomas County transit van is available to all people in Colby, said Shelly Harms, county clerk. Operating from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, Colby residents needing to use this service can call 460-2901. Harms said the transit van is not available to make emergency runs to the hospital. "If you are in need of an ambulance," she said, "you need to call 911." The transit van driver, Ed Dean, is not qualified to transport patients to Citizens Medical Center or any other hospital facility. For questions about the transit van, either call the service number or the county clerk's office, 460-4500.

After school enrollment continues
The Thomas County Interagency Coalition in conjunction with area businesses and organizations will continue its After School Program for students in third, fourth and fifth grades. The program will run Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays Jan.

9 through March 16.
Transportation from Colby Grade School to the Colby Community Building will be provided by the school district; parents must pick up their child from the community building at 5:15 following the program. For questions or to enroll a child, call 460-8177.

City-county holiday schedules
The City of Colby's sanitation trucks will run the following holiday schedule: Friday, Dec. 23 - normal routes; Saturday, Dec. 24, normal commercial routes; Monday, Dec. 26, no sanitation service; Tuesday, Dec. 27, Monday route and regular Tuesday service routes. During the New Year's Week on Friday, Dec. 30, trucks will run normal routes; Saturday, Dec. 31, normal commercial service; Monday, Jan. 2, no sanitation routes; and Tuesday, Jan 3, Monday route with regular Tuesday service route. For questions, call 460-4410.
On the county-side, the court house, landfill and health department will be closing. The landfill will close at noon on Saturday and will be closed Sunday through Tuesday, Dec. 27. It will reopen at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 28 at 9 a.m. The courthouse and health department will reopen on the same day. The landfill will also be closed on Sunday, Jan. 1 and Monday, Jan. 2. It will reopen on Tuesday, Jan. 3 at 9 a.m., along with the courthouse and landfill.

Service center building to be owned by board

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A 15-year lease involving the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center in Oakley will end next month and its director is ready for it.
Dan Thornton said Tuesday ownership of the Service Center will change hands Jan. 20. Currently owned by the City of Oakley, Logan County and the Oakley school district, the center will be solely owned by the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Cener board.
"The deed will be signed over and the title to the property will go to the board of directors," Thornton said. Originally located in Colby, the Service Center board at that time saw the need for a larger facility.
"The board put out a proposal for more space for a center appropriately sized for the services we furnish," Thornton said.
Providing educational needs to 19 school districts, Thornton said the Service Center makes available to the districts teachers for special education, early childhood programs, as well as adult training programs.
Federal grants provide agriculture and vocational rehabilitation

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Dan Thornton,
Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center

programs to adults and Head Start programs to young children. The center also has meeting rooms and interactive television options for educational outreach to the northwest Kansas area.
For the past 15 years, the Service Center has leased the land and building at 703 W. 2nd St. in Oakley for \$1 each year.
During that same timeframe, Oakley, Logan County and the Oakley school district shared upkeep and insurance for the land and building.
According to Oakley City Clerk Rose Wessell, the cost of maintaining the land and building runs about \$10,000 annually.
The city's portion of that cost was set at 45 percent, the county paid 25 percent and the school paid 30 percent.

Thornton said the Service Center's \$9 million budget stems from the money paid by the 19 district membership.
"The amount it costs each district depends on what services a district purchased," he said.
Each district also has one of its school board members designated as a board member at the Service Center.
Districts participating in the membership include Brewster, Cheylin, Colby, Golden Plains, Goodland, Grinnell, Healey, Hill City, Hoxie, Norton, Oakley, Oberlin, Quinter, Rawlins County, St. Francis, Sharon Springs, Tri-Plains at Winona, WaKeeney, Weskan and Wheatland at Grainfield.
Thornton said hardly anyone will notice the change of ownership when it takes place.



JAN KATZACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

The Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center is located in Oakley and will change ownership in January.

"It will just become our own," he said. "We don't anticipate the districts will see any changes whatsoever."
"They won't see an increase in charges because we've put money aside. Our membership is stable and on Jan. 20 nobody will know it's operated any differently."

Officials worry about whooping cough

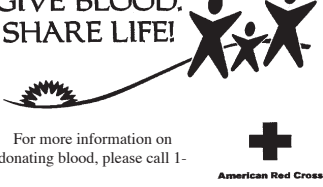
TOPEKA (AP) — State health officials are worried enough about a jump in whooping cough cases this year that they're suggesting that young teenagers and adults who work with infants and toddlers may need vaccinations.
The Department of Health and Environment reported Wednesday that 269 cases of whooping cough have been confirmed by laboratories this year, and health care professionals have reported an additional 266 probable cases.
The total of 535 confirmed and probable cases compares with 250 last year and only 44 in 2003, department officials said.
Robert St. Peter, a pediatrician who serves as president and chief executive officer of the nonprofit Kansas Health Foundation, said the state hasn't seen such a dramatic increase in reported whooping cough cases since 1986. And, he noted, nearly two-thirds of this year's cases have victims 10 or older.
"It represents an outbreak of it," St. Peter said during an interview. "This certainly is an increase in the number of cases that catches your attention and points out the general importance of getting immunized."

While some of the increase is due to better reporting, much of it can be attributed to a spike in cases that occurs every three to five years, KDHE officials said during a news conference.
"Part of the issue is that people can be contagious with the disease, with this bacteria, before they show any signs," said Gail Hansen, state epidemiologist. "I suspect we really have a combination of things going on, but I think we really do have a rise."
The state recommends that children receive four immunizations against whooping cough during their first 18 months of life, and it requires children to have been vaccinated to enter school.
But health officials said a child's immunity begins to wane afterward, making adolescents more susceptible. A vaccine hasn't been available for older children and adults until this year.
"If you do have a child who is entering early adolescence, I think it probably is worth checking with that child's physician," said Dr. Howard Rodenberg, the state health director.
St. Peter said in 1992, the composition of the whooping cough vac-

cine changed in an effort to reduce its side-effects. He said Kansas' statistics suggests vaccinating young children doesn't provide lifelong immunity.
"We need to be vigilant about maintaining good immunization rates across the whole population," he said.
A bacterium causes whooping cough, or pertussis, and the initial symptoms mirror those of a cold or the flu — sneezing, a fever, a runny nose and a mild cough. Later, the coughing becomes so severe that victims sometimes have trouble catching their breath, creating a whooping sound when they cough. The disease is transmitted through droplets in the air, when someone coughs or sneezes.
Rodenberg said infants are the most vulnerable because their airways are smaller and become restricted more easily. The state's only whooping cough death so far this year was an infant in south-central Kansas over the summer.
Although adolescents and adults are better able to cope with the disease, they can spread it, KDHE officials said. Thus, they said, parents should consider getting their young teenagers vaccinated and adults

should consider vaccines themselves if they are in contact with many small children.
"I wish I had some better things to do for prevention, but vaccine is our best prevention," Hansen said. "It's a very easily transmitted bacteria."

GIVE BLOOD.
SHARE LIFE!



For more information on donating blood, please call 1-

Merry Christmas from



First National Bank

We will be closed on
Saturday, December 24 &
Monday, December 26
for First National Bank employees to
spend time with their families.

Colby, Bird City, Goodland,
Oberlin, Quinter,
Sharon Springs & St. Francis, KS
Bennett & Kirk, CO

MEMBER
FDIC

Brownback gives away donations

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Sam Brownback is giving away \$42,000 in campaign donations connected to indicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff, a move several other lawmakers have taken in recent days to avoid the appearance of undue influence.
The Kansas Republican, who is weighing a presidential bid, is also giving up a separate \$5,000 contribution from a defense contractor at the center of ex-Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham's bribery case, Brownback spokesman Brian Hart said Wednesday.
"Senator Brownback has always preferred to either return or donate to charity any campaign or leadership funds that even have the appearance of impropriety," Hart said.
Brownback's now-defunct Restore America Political Action

Committee received the \$42,000 in 2002 from four American Indian tribes represented by Abramoff, according to Federal Election Commission records.
Abramoff and his partner, Michael Scanlon, collected over \$80 million from tribes to lobby Congress on casino gambling and other issues.
The Justice Department is investigating whether trips, gifts and campaign donations arranged by Abramoff were in exchange for official acts by members of Congress and if bribes were defrauded.
Members of Congress who accepted campaign donations from Abramoff's clients have begun returning the money as the investigation ratchets up in intensity. The list includes Montana's entire congressional delegation: Democrat Max

Baucus and Republican Conrad Burns, both senators, and Republican Rep. Denny Rehberg.
"Although the four tribes that contributed to his PAC never met with nor asked the senator for any help, Brownback felt it best to donate these funds to charity," Hart said.
The \$5,000 donation was from ADCS Inc., a California defense contractor that allegedly bribed Cunningham with cash and gifts in exchange for government business.
Hart said Brownback decided to give away the ADCS contribution last week to Doctors on Call for Service, a Christian organization that, according to its Web site, links U.S. physicians with African national physicians to exchange techniques and experiences.

We will be closed on
Monday, December 26th!

There will be no Free Press on
Monday, December 26th and our office will be
closed to celebrate this joyous holiday.

You should receive a
Free Press on Tues, Wed, Thurs. & Fri.

EARLY DEADLINES:
Tues., Dec. 27 Free Press: Thursday, Dec. 22 @ 3:00 p.m., display
ads; Friday, Dec. 23 @ noon, word ads.

We wish everyone a...
Merry Christmas!



COLBY
FREE PRESS

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462-3963