

Weather
Corner

The forecast

Tonight — Mostly clear with a low around 26. Northwest wind between 10 and 15 mph. **Friday** — Mostly sunny with a high around 48. Breezy with a northwest wind between 15 and 20 mph. **Friday night** — Partly cloudy with a low near 21. Northwest wind 5 to 10 mph becoming south. **Saturday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 60. South wind around 15 mph. **Saturday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 26. **New Year's Day** — A 20 percent chance of rain after 1 p.m. Partly cloudy with a high near 52. **Sunday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 24. **Monday** — Partly cloudy with a high around 56. **Monday night** — Mostly clear with a low near 23. **Tuesday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 53.

Temperatures

Records for this date, 74 in 1980, -16 in 1894. 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

Commissioners to meet

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Friday at the courthouse. Items on the agenda include a resolution for excess funds; a discussion on a clothing allowance for employees with the county road department and landfill; County Treasurer Donita Applebury and County Clerk Shelly Harms on the remaining budget; approval of Dec. 19 minutes, December payroll and second half of December accounts payable; abatements and a cereal malt license for Camp Inn Gas and Oil.

County annual reports due

Shelly Harms, Thomas County clerk, has forwarded notices and annual report forms to the township, cemetery and fire districts so they may begin compiling the information for the annual report on Nov. 30, 2005. The report contains information on all income and expenses in each fund. It pro-

vided certification from the financial institutions on their ending balances in each fund. The reports are due in the office of the county clerk no later than Jan. 31, 2006.

Treasurer's office closed Friday

The Thomas County Treasurer's office will close all day Friday for auditing, said Donita Applebury, treasurer. She wanted to remind anyone who wants to pay taxes or renew tags with last names beginning with U, X, Y and Z that they have until Thursday to do so. For questions, call 460-4520.

Youth all-night party Saturday

The Rappin' and Rockin' New Year's Eve Concert and Party begins at 9 p.m., Saturday and will continue through 6 a.m., Sunday, said Rich Epp, co-owner of J&R Marketing. The concert and party is open to middle school, high school and college students under 21. Christian rap band "Grits" will

kick off the night with Christian rock band "Pillar" following all at Colby Community College. After pizza and a battle of the bands later in the evening, participants can take part in bowling, dodgeball, movies, and basketball with fear factor at 5 a.m. and closing ceremonies at 6 a.m. For questions, call (785) 443-1994 or (785) 460-9751.

Genesis food drive to continue

With the holiday season behind us 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 p.m. at the Colby United Methodist Church, 950 S. Franklin Ave. All female singers are encouraged to attend anytime.

Basic consumer information available through hotline

Dear Attorney General Kline:

I try to be an informed consumer but sometimes I just need help in locating basic information. Is there a convenient way to access a variety of consumer information?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

My office receives hundreds of calls each week from consumers who are unhappy with their purchase of a product or service, are concerned about being victimized by a potential scam or have otherwise been ripped-off.

It is certainly much easier and more effective to prevent people from becoming victims of financial crimes than to make them financially whole again.

One such tool is the 24-Hour Consumer Information Line which is maintained by my Consumer Protection Division. Kansans have access to valuable consumer information by simply making a telephone call and following steps to learn about scams, how to make a wise vehicle purchase and preventing unwanted telephone solicitations.



Phill Kline

• Consumer Corner

The number is 785-296-2424.

Here is the list of topics available on the Consumer Information Line:

1. Common Scams — Scam artists target potential victims in a variety of ways. Category 1 includes valuable information for individuals who fear they may have been targeted or would like information regarding the most common scams occurring in the United States. Information is included about mail, phone, Internet, door-to-door and home repair scams.

2. Communicating with the Consumer Protection Division — A major function of the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Division is to review each complaint received, which amounts to more than 7,500 written complaints each year. By selecting Category 2, you'll hear information on how to file a complaint, requesting a speaker and/or educational material from the office, information about the Vulnerable Adults Task Force, and how to contact the Communications Office.

3. Billing Issues — Consumers

receive more bills today than ever and many are neither short nor simple. Category 3 contains a vast amount of information regarding billing issues including tips to follow when you are billed for merchandise returned or never received, what you should know about phone solicitations for "free" or "special" deals, protections you may be offered under the Fair Debt Collection Practice Act, information about telephone cramming, and Internet service.

4. Vehicle Purchases — Buying or leasing a vehicle is an exciting time for many consumers. It is important that consumers make an informed decision before signing a contract. Category 4 contains information designed to inform and educate consumers on a variety of issues relating to buying, leasing, and owning a vehicle.

5. Unwanted Phone Calls — The Kansas No-Call Act allows Kansas residents to make their phone numbers "off limits" to certain types of sales calls. By choosing Category 5 you will learn how to register your

telephone numbers, be briefed on laws regulating the faxing or commercial advertisements and hear tips to reduce unwanted e-mail.

6. Consumer Laws — Although our office is prohibited by law from giving private legal advice, Kansans may find Category 6 helpful in understanding several consumer laws including the Three-day Right to Cancel, Door-to-Door sales, Credit Repair, and the Kansas Lemon Law.

7. Problem Solving Advice — Many problems in the marketplace can be handled without contacting an outside agency for assistance. Category 7 documents steps which should be considered when attempting to resolve a consumer complaint.

8. Commonly Asked Questions — The Consumer Protection Division receives about one thousand calls each week from consumers seeking information on a variety of

issues. Category 8 contains answers to frequently asked questions. The topics in this category and those in Category 1 are changed as needed.

Kansas consumers can access the Consumer Information Line by dialing 785-296-2424, and then choosing the category that interests them by pressing number 1 through 8, and then choosing the specific message that interests them also by pressing 1 through 8.

Attorney General Phill Kline offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints or questions. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Phill Kline, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310.

Twinkie maker's losses
bigger than thought

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Interstate Bakeries Corp., the maker of Hostess Twinkies and Wonder Bread, announced Wednesday that it lost \$32.5 million last month, its largest one-month drop since filing for bankruptcy last year.

The company also reduced its retained earnings for the prior fiscal year by \$331.5 million, including a \$229 million reduction in the value of intangible assets. It also set aside \$66 million to cover what it must contribute to pension plans.

Interstate Bakeries said in October it was unable to file long-overdue financial reports because of disagreements with the American Bakers Association over contributions to retirement plans.

It added that it would be in default of its debtor-in-possession financing if it can't file the required reports by the end of the year.

For the four weeks ending Nov. 12, the Kansas City-based company said it took in \$231.3 million in revenue, down slightly from the \$231.8 million reported in October, which at the time was the lowest one-month sales record.

By comparison, the company reported sales of \$259.9 million and a loss of \$1.8 million during the

same period last year.

Since then, the company has streamlined its operations. It has closed six bakeries since April and consolidating delivery routes.

Expenses during the period declined 2.2 percent to \$122.6 million from \$125.4 million reported in October, the company said.

The company also reported restructuring charges of \$2.7 million in professional fees and bonuses, offset by \$2.5 million in severance accrual adjustments.

In addition, the company estimated it would take a \$2.2 million loss because new federal regulations requiring manufacturers to list allergens and trans fatty acids in their products has made its old packaging obsolete.

Interstate Bakeries filed for Chapter 11 protection on Sept. 22, 2004, blaming a combination of low sales and high operational costs.

The monthly progress reports are required by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Kansas City.

Shares of Interstate Bakeries, which trade over the counter, remained unchanged at \$7.40 by the end of trading Wednesday. The stock has traded in a 52-week range of \$4.50 to \$13.

Westar rate
hike approved

TOPEKA (AP) — State regulators Wednesday approved a \$3 million increase in Westar Energy Inc.'s rates, but almost half its customers will see a small decrease in their electric bills.

Westar, the state's largest electric utility, had sought to raise its rates \$84 million and pass along its fuel costs and environmental costs directly to consumers.

The Kansas Corporation Commission approved the last two requests but set a lower profit than the company had sought as a regulated monopoly.

Westar argued it needed additional revenues to keep up with rising operating costs and to maintain customer service programs, but critics said Westar would be earning a healthy profit while shifting risk to consumers.

The decision drew immediate criticism. Jim Zakoura, an attorney for Westar's large industrial customers, said his clients were "deeply disappointed" and would ask the state Court of Appeals to overturn parts of the commission's order, in hopes of winning a rate decrease for all Westar customers. But he acknowledged the courts typically defer to the KCC.

Faced with a Drinking Problem?
Perhaps
Alcoholics Anonymous Can Help
Meetings are Open to the Public
City Hall Basement
Mondays & Thursdays - 8:30 p.m.

State to help fund water park

KANSAS CITY (AP) — State officials have agreed to help finance a \$412 million water park and resort in western Wyandotte County.

In a letter to Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kan., Mayor Joe Reardon, Commerce Secretary Howard Fricke said he had determined that the project met the requirements for sales tax revenue — or STAR — bonds, which are a popular way to generate public financing.

The letter, dated Friday and released Tuesday by county officials, said the 300-acre project would be a major tourism and entertainment development.

Under the agreement, the county could sell up to \$225 million in STAR bonds to help build the 300-acre resort.

Design work on the project, being developed by Schlitterbahn Waterworks of New Braunfels, Texas, is expected to start next year with the resort ready for business by 2009.

The park, to be named Schlitterbahn Vacation Village, would be across Interstate 435 from Kansas Speedway and the Village

West commercial development. The speedway and Village West also were financed with the help of STAR bonds.

Developers say the Schlitterbahn project will create 3,000 new jobs, generate \$200 million in annual sales, pay \$3 million in property taxes every year.

Developers hope it will attract more than 3 million visitors a year.

We will be closed on
Saturday, December 31st &
Monday, January 2
to allow our employees to spend
the holiday with their families.

*Happy A Safe &
Happy New Year!*



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