



Fair board changes its booking rules

by Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Anyone wanting to rent the 4-H Building at the Thomas County Fairgrounds will have to call the fairground groundskeepers now.



S. Strange

The fair board approved at its Thursday meeting letting groundskeepers Ron and Cheryl Kogler take over the building's booking from the county extension office. The Kogler's will take over the booking Feb. 1.

Board president Stan Strange said it's something the board has been considering because the Kogler's home is at the fairgrounds.

"I think it would be easier and less hassle if they were to handle it," Strange said.

Along with the change in booking, there will be a walk-through of the building before and after it's rented so it can be agreed upon what is considered "clean."

A sign will also be at the 4-H Building with all of the contact information for rental and emergencies.

Board member Darrel Dible suggested having a sheet for people to sign, which will include the rules.

It will mainly be for third-party renters, anyone who is using the building for activities not related to 4-H or extension.

Extension agent Joe Leibbrandt said most of the 4-H clubs know to clean up the building after they're done with activities.

He also suggested having a calendar at the extension office so the Kogler's will have know when 4-H/extension activities are scheduled.

In other business, the board had a special session to elect new officers. Strange was re-elected as board president and board member Mark Anderson will keep his position as vice president.

The board also discussed changes to the fair book. Approved were moving open class entries to 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. the Monday before the fair, with judging to start at 5 p.m.

It will be for non-animal entries only.

Board member Nancy Rundel said there are many things going on at once, and moving the entry day might interfere with other activities, and might make it difficult for people or 4-H members to get items entered.

Anderson said there's always a lot going on at the fair, and people and kids will manage.

Strange agreed, but said there's only so much they can do.

"No matter how we do it we're not going to make everybody happy," he said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press



A day in the life

ABOVE: Colby High School junior Scott Blanton worked on his art project in class today. According to Donna Roberts, art instructor, the students are preparing for a contest next month. **LEFT:** Colby High School senior and office aide Sarah Redmond prepared to mail out tickets to sponsors of the Orange and Black Classic basketball tournament, which runs Thursday through Saturday.

New pharmacy to open in area

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A contract has been signed with a candidate who intends to open a pharmacy in Oakley.

Susan Bloom, executive director of Logan County Healthcare Foundation, Inc., announced Tuesday the board of directors has signed a contract with Kezia Schwieterman.

"We are very pleased to have found Kezia and feel that she will be an added asset to the community," Bloom said.

Schwieterman grew up in Syracuse and is currently completing her rotations in pharmacy at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. She is expected to graduate in May.

"After graduation, Kezia has to take her pharmacy board tests so we are hoping for the pharmacy to open in late summer," Bloom said.

On Monday, Schwieterman will be in Oakley presenting information about the new Medicare Prescription Plan. Presentations will be at 10 a.m. at the Logan County Manor, at 12:30 at the Logan

"...she will be an added asset to the community."

Susan Bloom.
Healthcare foundation

County Senior Citizen's Center, and at 3 p.m. at the Logan County Hospital. The public is invited.

"We are very excited that she is willing to come out and give these presentations about the Medicare Prescription Plan," Bloom said.

Logan County Healthcare Foundation is funded entirely through private means. Funding comes from tax credits, fundraising activities, donations and planned giving. Donations to the foundation can be set up as planned giving through an estate or trust, made as a memorial or in any way of the giver's choice. For more information about the foundation can call Bloom at (785) 672-3663 or stop by the office at 216 Center Ave in Oakley.

Red Cross looking for a few good donors

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The American Red Cross wants you.

They're looking for new blood donors, and anyone wanting to help save a life has the chance at the first blood drive of the new year in Colby.

The drive will be from noon to 5:45 p.m. Wednesday at the Colby Community Building.

Jo Cheney, one of the organizers, said the donation process is simple

and takes about an hour, but the actual blood donation takes seven to 10 minutes.

People can set up an appointment at www.redcross.org or by calling 1-800-GIVE LIFE. Walk-ins are welcome also.

First-time donors need identification and returning donors need the same thing, or their donor card.

"They need to bring a photo ID with them," she said. "That's really important."

Donors have to answer health

questions and undergo a screening to check their temperature, pulse, blood pressure and blood count.

Cheney asaid if anyone has recently had a tattoo or piercing, they have to wait 12 months before donating.

A person can donate blood every eight weeks, if they meet the requirements.

She said they had more first-time donors at their summer drive last year and usually get more during their annual drive at Colby High School.

Cheney said their goal for this drive is the same as it is at each drive — 150 units of blood.

"The Red Cross sets that," she said. "It's because that way, they know how many beds, supplies and nurses to bring, and having a number in mind lets them move people through efficiently."

Suggestions to help first-time donors who might be nervous about donating are to drink plenty of water and to eat before donating.

Lunch will be served all day at the blood drive.

New Blue Cross plan not available in Thomas County

TOPEKA (AP) — The state's largest health insurance company announced Thursday that it will offer a new, half-cost plan designed for uninsured Kansans.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas said its ValueBlue plan would be available in 87 counties, starting March 1. People will be eligible if their household incomes are no more than double the federal poverty — \$2,682 a month for a single parent with two children — and if they've not had insurance for a year.

The program is not available in 16 counties, including Thomas and Decatur, because Blue Cross hasn't signed up providers.

Blue Cross officials said health care providers agreed to take half their normal reimbursements. Also, the company plans to

absorb administrative costs estimated at an average of \$500 for every new contract.

"If we want a healthier Kansas, then we need to step up and do something," said company spokesman Graham Bailey.

During a news conference, Blue Cross touted the plan as a cooperative effort with the Kansas Medical Society, the Kansas Hospital Association and Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger's office.

Blue Cross provides group health insurance plans for about 650,000 people in 103 of the state's 105 counties, all except Johnson and Wyandotte. The company collects \$1.2 billion in premiums annually.

The company still hasn't signed on health care providers in 16 counties, including Atchison, Butler and Harvey, but hopes to do so in the future.

"We recognize that we also share in the responsibility in providing the availability of affordable health insurance to Kansans," said Michael Mattox, Blue Cross' chief executive officer.

ValueBlue's coverage will mirror the company's popular AffordaBlue plan but at half the cost. Families still will face up to \$3,000 a year in out-of-pocket expenses and will pay \$25 for routine doctor's visits and the first \$100 of their prescription costs.

But the plan differs from other attempts to provide low-cost plans by not sacrificing benefits.

"I think we all realize that it's not a perfect solution but it's, I think, a step in the right direction," said Jerry Slaughter, the Kansas Medical Society's executive director. "You can't let perfect get in the way of

progress, and this is progress."

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who previously served as insurance commissioner, called Blue Cross' new plan "a great step forward."

"I love to see the providers stepping up and saying, 'We can make this work,' and help to figure a situation where we can help Kansans without health insurance get health coverage," she said during an interview.

State officials estimate that more than one in every 10 Kansas residents is not insured, or about 300,000 people. Praeger said a 2000 study suggested that more than half have gone without insurance for at least two years.

"If you get people insured," Slaughter said, "they're going to be healthier, more

productive. You'll, we hope, identify problems early that could become more serious later and reduce overall costs to the individual and system that way."

The state already provides coverage for children whose household incomes are double the federal poverty level or less. Sebelius has proposed spending an additional \$3.5 million annually to ensure that no children age 5 and under are uninsured.

But the eligibility requirements are tougher for adults who want help from the state. They have to live in households earning less than a third of the poverty level — only \$429 a month for a family of three — to qualify for coverage through the Medicaid program.

Bailey said the new plan is designed for adults who don't qualify for Medicaid.