

Weather  
Corner



Breezy,  
warmer

**The forecast**  
**Tonight** — Mostly cloudy with a low around 25. Northwest wind around 10 mph. **Tuesday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 56. West wind between 10 and 15 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph. **Tuesday night** — Mostly clear with a low around 25. West wind between 5 and 10 mph. **Wednesday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 50. West wind between 5 and 15 mph. **Wednesday night** — Mostly clear with a low around 23. **Thursday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 64.  
**Temperatures**  
Sunday's high, 61  
Low this morning, 18  
Records for this date, 79 in 1939, -15 in 1932  
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00  
December's precipitation, 0.00  
A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-8367.

Foundation  
director  
seeks more  
funding

**GRANTS**  
from page 1

school, the Thomas County Health Department, Thomas County Fair Board, Golden Plains Elementary and more.

“The foundation is limited in the scope of the grants it can give, but if the endowment is grown, that will change,” Eicher said.

Increasing funds has been one of Eicher’s priorities since he took over the position in May, replacing Danielle Freeman.

Eicher was previously a grant writer with the Scott Community Foundation in Scott City.

He has a doctorate in English, and has taught at the University of Kansas, outreach at Colby Community College, Colby High School and Fort Hays State University. He chose to work for a non-profit because jobs requiring doctorate in English are hard to find in this area.

The foundation just held a fundraiser Saturday. It was the Santa’s Workshop at Pioneer Memorial Library, where children shopped for inexpensive gifts for their parents.

The foundation may be reached by calling 460-9152.


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Briefly

**Fair board to meet Thursday**  
The Thomas County Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. Thursday at the 4-H Building at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Items on the agenda include Thomas County extension agent report; bills and financial report; committee reports; a discussion on Pickin’ on the Plains bluegrass festival contract terms and the Thomas County Community Foundation fair breakfast. The meeting is open to the public.

**First half of taxes due Dec. 20**  
The Thomas County Treasurer’s office reminds taxpayers the first half of their 2006 taxes are due by Wednesday, Dec. 20, said Donita Applebury, treasurer. In addition, persons renewing license plate tags with the last name beginning with U through Z need to buy them no later than 4 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 28. For questions, call 460-4520.

**Goal-setting session planned**  
The Colby School Board will hold a special board meet-

ing at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Administration Building, 600 W. Third St. The meeting is a goal-setting session for the board.

**County offices holiday closings**  
All county offices at the Thomas County Courthouse will be closed Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 25-26 and Monday, Jan. 1, 2007. The county landfill will also be closed those dates, and also on Sunday, Dec. 24.

**Clerk of district court to close early**  
The Thomas County Clerk of the District Court will close at noon, Friday, Dec. 29, for its end-of-the-year accounting. The office will reopen at 8 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 2. For questions, call 460-4540.

**Babysitting fundraiser planned**  
The Colby Sweet Thunder 14 and Under softball team is sponsoring a New Year’s Eve babysitting event to help raise

money for travel expenses, uniforms and other items during summer games. The babysitters will provide food, fun, and games for children from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. at the Ascension-on-the-Prairie Episcopal Church, 1170 Wheatridge Dr. To make reservations, call Evelyn or Sara Martin, 462-3041; Buzzy and Bailey Koerperich, 460-8261; or Karen and Terra Raymond, 460-3694.

**‘Diamonds’ to perform in Colby**  
The Western Plains Arts Association will present the Diamonds at 7:30 p.m., Thursday in the Colby High School auditorium. The group performs timeless hits from the 50s and 60s, an its vocal quartet describes itself as “classic rock and roll with today’s attitude.” Their first major hit recording, *Little Darlin’*, is sometimes referred to as “the National Anthem of Rock and Roll.”

Admission is with season pass or at the door: \$15 adults; \$8 children. This program is presented by the Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency, and National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Prosecutors may be hampered by ‘Jessica’s Law’

WICHITA (AP) — Prosecutors charged with bringing child molesters and rapists to justice said a new effort to strengthen prison sentences could make their jobs harder.

Faced with longer prison sentences under the so-called “Jessica’s Law,” suspects are less likely to plead guilty and more willing to go to trial, police and prosecutors said. That would require putting frightened children on the stand.

“These cases are so hard,” said Anderson County Attorney Fred Campbell. “Parents want to push for a trial. But I’ve found that testifying in these cases can be much harder on the child than the actual abuse.”

The Sedgwick County district attorney’s office estimates the number of trials for the three full-time prosecutors in its sex crime unit will increase by 25 percent, putting an additional burden on the court system.

Other jurisdictions, already short on manpower or expertise in trying child sex cases, may decide to avoid filing charges, said Kelly Robbins, director of the Western Kansas

Child Advocacy Center in Scott City and a former Kansas Bureau of Investigation agent.

“You get a prosecutor not used to handling these cases, and you may find fewer charges are going to be filed,” she said. “Or because of the new sentencing laws, you may find these cases charged as a nonsexual offense, like aggravated battery, where they can have a better chance of working out a plea.”

The law, which went into effect July 1, requires a life sentence for sex crimes carried out by adults against children 14 or younger. First-time offenders would be eligible for parole after 25 years.

Before that, Kansas Department of Corrections statistics show, child sex offenders received an average of one to 13 years in prison.

“What they’ve done is make these sentences comparable to murder,” said Dan Monnat, a Wichita criminal defense lawyer.

Judges are allowed to reduce a sentence if the defendant requests it. Monnat said they will lead many defendants to decide whether to go to trial based on the how often the judge follows plea agreements.

“It’s better if your client gets the book thrown at them after a trial, rather than getting the book thrown at them after they’ve given up their right to contest their guilt in front of jury,” Monnat said.

The law is modeled on similar legislation passed in Florida, which was created after 9-year-old Jessica Lunsford disappeared in 2005. Her body was later discovered buried behind a house where a convicted sex offender had been staying.

Attorney General Phill Kline stands behind Jessica’s Law, saying it was needed to discourage people who preyed on children.

“Kansas laws were so weak that our state was a target destination for this type of activity,” Kline said.

But others say it may actually let more guilty people go free.

Robbins said plea deals kept children from having to testify. With nothing to lose on a longer sentence, suspects may be willing to gamble that jurors won’t believe a young victim.

“Adults are bad witnesses in sex cases,” Robbins said. “Think about putting a 5-year-old on the witness stand. And if you have a prosecutor

who does not know how to get a child to tell in their own words what happened.”

Incoming Attorney General Paul Morrison said it’s too early to determine the effects of Jessica’s Law. But he said he would track how prosecutors apply the new law when the first cases come to trial next year.

“What you don’t want to see happen, because of this law, is a massive increase in charge-bargaining, and you don’t want to see an increase of cases that don’t get charged, because prosecutors don’t want to utilize it,” Morrison said.

Charge-bargaining is filing a case under a lesser offense.

Prosecutors said they wish lawmakers had made the tough sentences optional for the worst cases, giving them extra leeway in arranging a plea. An amendment to do that passed in the House and failed in the Senate.

Backers of such a change said it would be political suicide to offer it now.


“If I would try to bring up that same amendment next session, I know what would happen,” said

Sen. Phil Journey, R-Haysville.

“The postcard that goes out the week before the next election says ‘soft on child molesters.’”

Still, Morrison said his office will ask the Legislature to revisit the law next year to at least fix some technical problems, such as a provision preventing judges from considering a person’s convictions before 1994 when considering a sentence.


“The good news is we’re going to have a lot more sentencing horsepower for people who repeatedly abuse kids — and that’s a great thing,” Morrison said. “But we need a little bit of discretion in that law to make sure justice is done.”




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Fastenal~All types of fasteners, tools, anchors, plumbing and electrical, safety equipment and janitorial supplies.

Colby Sew & Vac~Fabric, Sewing Machines, Vacuums, Space Heaters, Supplies, Sewing Cabinets, and Classes.

The Tool Box~Custom Cabinets, Pulls, Counter Tops, Sink, Faucets, Supplies & More.

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Kansas Country Store~Kansas-made Gifts, Kansas Foods, KU, KSU and Neb. Items, T-Shirts, Limestone, Jewelry, Art and More.

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