



COLBY FREE PRESS

Kidnap suspect waits for trial

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A Colorado kidnapper arrested in Colby is still waiting for trial in Fort Collins, Colo.

According to Colby Police Department Detective Gary Shull, the police were alerted to a kidnapping in December. Shull said at 5:18 p.m. Dec. 22, Colby police officers were called to the Budget Inn and Suites 1745 W. Fourth St. in Colby to investigate a note that had been delivered to the manager by one of the motel guests.

"The note contained information that led officers to believe a domestic violence situation was in progress in one of the guest rooms," Shull said.

Shull said the officers contacted the phone number on the note and found it to be relatives of Jennifer Courtney. The family explained the abduction of Courtney was being investigated by Fort Collins police.

The lead detective was contacted and advised Mark L Tuckel should be considered armed and dangerous.

"The Colby Police Department Special Response Team was alerted and mobilized," Shull said.

He said, at 7:40 p.m. team members made entry into the motel room in such a manner to protect Courtney from injury while at the same time taking Tuckel into custody.

Tuckel was transported to the Thomas County Jail and held on the warrant from Fort Collins police. Courtney was placed into an awaiting ambulance and taken to Citizens Medical Center in Colby. She was admitted due to injuries sustained over the three-day kidnapping incident. She has since been released from the hospital and placed in a domestic violence shelter at an undisclosed location.

Items of evidence was collected from the motel room by Colby police and released to investigators from Fort Collins.

No local criminal charges are expected. Colby Police were assisted by the Thomas County Sheriff's Office.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Snow on the playground at Colby Grade School is piled up nearly to the bottom of the swings, having not been disturbed by the feet

of students. Cold weather and snow have kept students inside sometimes during recess over the past month.

Snow, cold not all fun and games

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Almost two feet of snow and sub-zero temperatures have kept school children inside during recess most of the past month.

But teachers and children alike are coping.

Dave Evert, principal at Sacred Heart School, said on warmer days, children have been allowed to go outside for recess.

"And as long as they have snow boots or a second pair of shoes to change into, they can play in the snow," he said.

The past month, it has not been

unusual to see pairs of boots lined up in the hall, waiting for recess.

Children in kindergarten and preschool have sometimes been kept inside, and on very cold days, like Friday, none of the children were let out.

"This is kind of a unique situation for most of those kids," Evert said.

Students in kindergarten through first grade have one or two recesses a day; third through fifth have one 15-minute recess.

"They need the fresh air," he said.

On the colder days, recess is spent in the gym playing board games or on activities such as jumping rope.

The different grades get the gym throughout the day for their recess.

"It has worked well, and parents are aware of the recess situation. A note was sent home reminding them to send hats and gloves with their children," Evert said.

Terrel Harrison, principal at Colby Grade School, said students have also been let outside. However, they haven't been out on the playground itself since last month. Instead, students can play on a large cement slab cleared of snow.

"We have been going out and playing," she said.

Students have also been kept in

side on those colder days. Depending on what is available, they have spent recess in the school gym or their classrooms.

"We prefer the students go outside to get some exercise, but they also have physical education class each day," she said.

"We haven't had anything like this in quite a while," she said.

Students at Heartland Christian School are spending recess inside, said Kim Schriener, secretary. Ice covering the playground area is keeping students in the gym, which is getting much use. Students are playing basketball, four-square and other activities.

Senators suggest mandatory kindergarten

TOPEKA (AP) — Educators say kindergarten has become so important to the development of children that it's time for the state to make attendance mandatory.

A bill sponsored by Sen. Laura Kelly, D-Topeka, and Sen. Jean Schodorf, R-Wichita, would do just that.

The mandatory school attendance age in Kansas is 7, and kindergarten is optional. The senators' bill would lower the mandatory age to 6, and require children to attend at least half-day kindergarten.

"Kindergarten used to be just total socialization," Topeka teacher Nancy Armstrong told Kelly during a meeting of educators. "That is changed. Kindergarten is the foundation. Without it, first-grade test scores are a struggle."

Mark Tallman, assistant executive director for advocacy at the Kansas Association of School Boards, said he's in favor of anything that improves attendance at all levels of education, including kindergarten.

"The problem is we don't require people to go to school, for all practical purposes," he said, noting that the measure also would address questions of attendance among home-schooled students.

Kelly said the measure wouldn't impose significant new costs to the state or schools because no additional classrooms or teachers would be needed.

Offices strive to keep control

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

County treasurers across Kansas have banned together to fight effects of a law which could take away the right to issue drivers licenses locally.

The Real ID Act sets national standards for state driver's licenses and identification cards used by non-drivers. Originally a House Bill which failed to pass, the bill was attached to a military bill that passed and became law May 11, 2005.

After May 11, 2008, federal agencies will not be allowed to accept, for any official purpose, a driver's license or identification card issued by a state unless it meets the Real ID Act. States not complying with the Act could lose federal funding.

Two slightly different worded resolutions are being sent to state and federal legislators asking residents not have to drive long distances to get a new driver's license. Wording differences on the resolutions depends on whether a county's treasurer's office or motor vehicle office issues the renewals.

"We are just trying to get prepared and get on top of it and not let it be taken away from us," Thomas County Treasurer Donita Applebury said.

Thomas County residents renew driver's licenses at the Kansas Driver's License Station at 990 S. Range Ave., considered a full-service station. Applebury said while Colby has a full-service station, wording on the resolution she supports does not limit her office from offering driver's license renewal should she decide to do so in the future.

Sheridan County residents renew their driver's licenses at the treasurer's offices in Hoxie, while Logan County residents do so in at the treasurer's office in Oakley.

Applebury asked Thomas County Commissioners Ken Christiansen and Byron Sowers Wednesday to sign a resolution asking state and federal governments to leave driver's license renewals at the local level. She, like other treasurers, is concerned federal law will force residents from Thomas County to drive to Hays to a regional center for their driver's license.

"We don't have any idea what changes will take place," she said.

As a full-service station like the one currently in Colby, drivers are able to obtain a regular driver's license or commercial driver's license. They can also deal with address changes or change an out-of-state license to a Kansas license. Should a regional center be established outside of Colby these services will move to the center. Should a regional center be established, treasurers in counties surrounding Colby would be forced to direct driver's to the new center.

Over the past several months, treasurers across Kansas have asked residents to sign petitions asking state and federal legislators to leave well enough alone.

Sheridan County Treasurer Esther Bainter last week had Sheridan County Commissioners sign one of the resolutions. At that time, Bainter said more than 9,000 signatures are being forwarded to state and federal officials asking no regional center be set up.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

The old stands on the north side of Dennen Field have nearly been completely dismantled. A new stadium will be in place before the 2007 football season.

Not only will Colby High have a new stadium, but a new football coach to go with it.

Colby schools begin search for coach

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The Colby School District is reviewing those interested to replace Bob Ray as Colby High School head football coach.

Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said the district has advertised for

the position and has already received some interest. He did not disclose any details.

Ray resigned in December to take a job as the assistant head football coach at McPherson College.

A committee, including high school principal Rocky Robbins, activities director Larry Gabel,

school board president Tracy Rogers and someone from the community will be used to review the applications.

Nielsen said he hopes to have a new coach in place by mid-March.

Ray taught the high school's strength conditioning class. A long-term substitute was hired to com-

plete the spring semester, Gabel said. Ray was also slated to be an assistant track coach this spring.

Hired last April, Ray lead the Eagles to a 1-8 record in his only season as coach. He was also the coach that broke Colby's losing streak that started during the 2004 season.