

Weather Corner



Snow forecast for Saturday

Tonight — Partly cloudy with a low around 14. West wind between 5 and 10 mph. **Saturday** — Snow likely, mainly after noon. Increasing clouds, with a high near 31. West wind 5 to 15 mph becoming south. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent. New snow accumulation of 1 to 2 inches possible. **Saturday night** — Snow likely. Cloudy with a low around 16. Southeast wind between 10 and 15 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent. **Sunday** — A 20 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy with a high near 32. North wind around 10 mph. **Sunday night** — Mostly cloudy with a low around 10. **Monday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 26. **Monday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 8. **Tuesday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 34.

Temperatures
Thursday's high, 26
Low this morning, 9
Records for this date, 70 in 1911, -21 in 1984
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
January's precipitation, 0.07
A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-8367.

Hoxie man threatens teen

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A Hoxie man has been charged in Sheridan County District Court with making threats against a Hoxie teenager.

David L. Obermeyer, 19, has been charged with one count each of criminal threat, disorderly conduct and harassment against Garrett Tacha, a junior at Hoxie High School.

Sheridan County Sheriff Brian Fenner on Thursday said Obermeyer allegedly used a cell phone to threaten Tacha on Jan. 13, and sent threatening e-mails to him on Jan. 14.

A preliminary hearing has been set for 2 p.m. Wednesday at the courthouse in Hoxie. Obermeyer is free on a \$5,000 cash bond.

Briefly

Heartland barbecue, auction Sunday

Heartland Christian School's junior/senior class will be having a silent auction during the school's annual barbecue 11-2 p.m. Sunday at the school. Auction proceeds will be used to help fund their trip to Washington D.C. in March. Auction items include a fountain from Barton Concrete Works, a piano, a Dell printer, three handmade quilts and numerous smaller items.

Gaither video Sunday

There will be a Gaither video concert at the Colby Wesleyan Church, 320 W. Pine, at 6 p.m., Sunday. This concert will feature Ernie Haase and Signature Sound. The concert is open to the public and free of charge.

Colby school board meeting set

The Colby School Board will meet at 7 p.m. Monday at

the school's administration building, 600 W. Third St. Items on the agenda include reports from the principals, superintendent and curriculum director; out of district field trip requests; a resolution to destroy records and personnel issues. The meeting is open to the public.

Commodity distribution Monday

United States Department of Agriculture commodities will be distributed from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Monday at the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office at the Senior Progress Center in Colby. Participants are asked to not arrive at the distribution site before 12:30 p.m. Eligible people who are not able to attend the distribution may send a signed permission slip with another person to pick up their commodities. For information, call 462-6744.

Commissioners to meet Monday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m.

Monday at the courthouse. Items on the agenda include a meeting at 9 a.m. with Lisa Molstad, Thomas County Health Department administrator, to discuss non-elected personnel issues; a letter from Jon Selley about storage of the public transportation van; dues for the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission and Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling Organization and Western Prairie RC&D; county population submitted by Jim Engel. The meeting is open to the public.

Extension sponsors workshop

The Thomas County Extension office is sponsoring a light-hearted workshop noon to 1 p.m., Tuesday, in the meeting room at the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave., Colby. For those who cannot remember someone's name, forgets their keys or is just a part of our hectic world, this event is for them and "laughing is required," Gerstner said. For questions, call 460-4582.

Proposal for protecting fetuses caught in debate

TOPEKA (AP) — Prompted by last year's murder of a pregnant Wichita teenager, legislators are renewing their push for a law aimed at protecting mothers-to-be and the fetuses they are carrying.

But efforts to eliminate what some lawmakers view as a gap in Kansas law are tangled up in the larger debate over abortion. Groups on both sides are working on rival proposals dealing with crimes against pregnant women and their fetuses.

Abortion opponents back a proposal to declare that the definition of "person" in the state's criminal code covers an "unborn child," from conception. Abortion rights supporters prefer alternatives such as creating a new crime of harming a fetus or increasing penalties for crimes against women and girls if they are pregnant.

The Senate Judiciary Committee agreed Tuesday to sponsor a bill increasing the penalties for homicides if the victim is pregnant, and abortion rights advocates planned a news conference Wednesday. The House Judiciary Committee plans to have a hearing Thursday on the abortion opponents' proposal.

"It's about punishment," said House Judiciary Committee Chairman Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson. "There's a void in the law. We need to do something about that."

However, abortion rights supporters continue to suspect the motives of legislators seeking a declaration that a fetus is a person, even if that change wouldn't apply to abortion. Kansans for Life, the state's largest anti-abortion group, has put such legislation at the top of its agenda for the year.

"It's the foot in the door, the camel's nose under the tent," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman John Vratil, R-Leawood. "That's why it's an abortion bill, even though some people would contend it's not."

Thirty-five states have some sort of law making it a crime to kill or harm a fetus, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, including Alabama, California, Illinois, Missouri and Ohio. However, laws vary state-to-state, and not all apply from conception.

In Kansas, a proposed "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" won House approval in 2002 and 2005, only to die in the Senate without a committee vote. The House also rejected a bill in 2004.

This year, advocates who back the abortion opponents' bill are calling the measure a proposed "Alexa's Law," naming it after the child 14-year-old Chelsea Ann Brooks was carrying. Her body was found in a field in mid-June, less than three weeks before she was due to give birth.

Three people were charged in the teenager's strangling. Authorities believe a 20-year-old was the child's father and paid \$500 to have the girl killed to avoid a statutory rape charge. The family is backing the proposed "Alexa's Law," and supporters of the measure have a Web site.

Separate but identical proposals are sponsored by Wichita-area Republicans, Steve Brunk in the House and Phil Journey in the Senate.

Kathy Ostrowski, a lobbyist for Kansans for Life, said fetal homicide laws deal with the "wanted

unborn," whose parents and grandparents frame ultrasound pictures or pin them on their refrigerators.

"They don't satisfy people who want to end abortion, and they don't satisfy people who want to keep abortion," she said. "They only satisfy crime victims' families who want the ability of a prosecutor to obtain maximum justice."

But Shawnee County District Attorney Robert Hecht said even if prosecutors can secure separate convictions for crimes against a woman and her fetus, a judge still can impose sentences that run simultaneously, not back-to-back. Also, a prosecutor who must prove that someone's action caused a woman to lose her baby will need access to high-quality forensic sci-

entists, he said.

Ashley Anstaett, a spokeswoman for Attorney General Paul Morrison, who supports abortion rights, said: "The best way to deal with these kind of situations would be to enhance penalties for those who harm a pregnant woman."


Julie Burkhart, a lobbyist for the abortion rights group ProKanDo, said its proposed "Motherhood Protect Act" — which makes it a felony to harm a pregnant woman — would keep a legal focus on violence against women, who are statistically more likely to face abuse after getting pregnant.

"We have to get at that root cause," she said.

Backers of the proposed "Alexa's Law" like O'Neal view it as the simplest solution, a change likely to cover most future problems. But abortion rights supporters like Rep. Paul Davis, D-Lawrence, a Judiciary Committee member, still worry about backers' ultimate motives.

"If we're going to have a debate about abortion, let's have a debate about abortion," Davis said. "Let's not try to sneak it into other issues that are going to have ramifications which we don't comprehend."

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