



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press
Crews from Cahoj Earthmoving of Atwood install security fencing Thursday around the lot at the corner of the College Drive and Range Avenue. The company is preparing the lot for the new Farm Credit of Western Kansas office building.

Farm Credit banks on new lot

The new Farm Credit of Western Kansas building, 1190 S. Range Ave., in Colby, is expected to be completed in June of 2009, said Larry Maxwell, president.

Groundbreaking for the new structure was held in the latter part of May and when finished will consolidate the Farm Credit staff, 375 S. Range Ave. into a 14,000 square-foot brick and stone building.

“Farm Credit has housed its local headquarters in Colby since its inception,” Maxwell said. “Originally operating as the Colby Federal Land Bank and the Northwest Kansas Production Credit Association, we bought the two businesses in 2000 and completed a corporate merger in 2002.”

Since then, he said they have



CONTRIBUTED GRAPHIC
An architecture’s conceptual drawing shows what the new Farm Credit of Western Kansas will look like. The new building will be 14,000 square feet.

continued to operate out of both buildings.

However, this past spring, Maxwell said a new site was purchased. “We seized the opportunity to purchase what we felt was the ideal location for our business when the J&J Oil and Deep Rock Cafe went to auction,” he said.

The architectural firm for the new Farm Credit building is GMCN Architects in Garden City and Woofter Construction of Colby is the general contractor.

Farm Credit of Western Kansas has more than \$125 million in assets, 22 employees and finances all aspects of agriculture.

Area fields are on brink of drought

HAYS (AP) — Weather officials are keeping an eye on conditions in northwest Kansas, where the last significant moisture came from heavy snows in 2006.

Farmers say even a 3-inch rain wouldn’t get them to where they need to be for the year.

Most counties in the region have received less than 6 inches of rain for the year, compared with an average of about 11 inches.

Wallace County farmer Bill Mai said he’s holding out hope for a good wheat crop despite the limited rain.

“Our wheat is growing off that big snow storm of a year and a half ago,” Mai said.

Average rains this year are below normal.

“We’re dry, dry, dry, dry,” said Kansas State University agronomist Jeanne Falk, who covers Wallace, Sherman and Cheyenne counties. “The western half of each of these counties are incredibly dry.”

“They’re definitely lacking on rainfall.”

The line between dry and not so dry is near Oakley, roughly where the heavy snows of 2006 began.

The state’s northwest counties are not on the state’s drought watch, but earlier this month, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius placed 13 southwest counties either on a drought watch or warning for the next two months.

Still, Tracy Streeter of the Kansas Water Office said there is little difference between conditions in the northwest and southwest.

Conditions are deteriorating, with a sliver of southwest Kansas now considered in exceptional drought, according to the

“We’re dry, dry, dry, dry . . . The western half of each of these counties are incredibly dry.”

Jeanne Falk, K-State

latest U.S. Drought Monitor.

Oren Dirks, who farms near Russell Springs, said dry weather isn’t the only woe.

“The rain we’ve gotten came with a price. It was the hail we had to pay,” he said.

“There’s very little wheat in the area that hasn’t been hailed on.”

Dirks said that if farmers in the area get 25 to 30 bushels an acre of wheat, “it will be a bumper crop.”

The December 2006 storm dropped as much as 36 inches of snow on areas of Wallace County.

But it also brought good fortune to farmers such as Mai.

“It was the best wheat crop ever,” he said.

Falk said residents who have lived through eight years of drought thought that storm had reversed that trend.

She now thinks otherwise.

“I don’t think it broke the drought,” Falk said.

Scott Mentzer, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Goodland, said the region is now classified officially as being in a moderate drought.

“We’ve had some pretty dry years,” Mentzer said.

“We’re not there yet, but if we keep on this pace, we’ll be hurting.”

Thomas County agencies to sponsor babysitting clinic

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor
pdeck@nwks.com

A two-day babysitting clinic is being offered Wednesday and Thursday, July 9-10 in the Colby Community Building’s activity room and open to anyone who has completed the fifth grade and older.

Now in its 11th year, said Diann Gerstner, one of the instructors, this clinic helps participants in learning what they need to know and what every parent wants in a babysitter.

“Topics include infant care, emergency procedures, fun activities, nutrition, age appropriate play and much more,” she said.

Most of the material the students will cover in the two-day event has been provided by Farm Bureau and the American Red Cross.

“The agenda,” she said, “will cover responsibilities, business, rules and interviewing with parents.”

In addition, the instructors will review baby bath demonstrations; child profiles (behavior) and reporting this to the parents; meal time; diapering; playing with and observing daycare in the park and babysitting experiences from a previous graduate.

“Babysitting clinics have been going on for many, many years,” Gerstner said. “Since the beginning of classes in Thomas County, we have had more than 250

graduates.”

The other instructor, Connie Walden, RN, with the health department, has been teaching the classes from the beginning.

Both Gerstner and Walden said there are many advantages for young people attending the clinic.

“They (students) will have the knowledge that all parents want a babysitter to have,” Gerstner said. For example, basic care such as feeding, dressing, rest and sleep will be discussed. Other areas reviewed will be safe play, helping children behave and safety (preventing injuries, first aid, and emergency situations).

Once the students have completed the coursework, Walden and Gerstner said they will have names and telephone num-

bers available for parents who request a sitter.

“We try to keep the classes interactive and fun,” Gerstner said. “We have a mother bring in her baby and demonstrate how to give a baby a bath and the class members bring in a stuffed animals and practice putting on diapers.”

In previous years, Gerstner said the participants always have great questions too.

One example she cited was: What is the scariest thing that ever happened to you while you were babysitting and what did you do?

“I am glad we can get the information to the participants in a fun way that they enjoy,” she said. “It really prepares them

to be great sitters and is a great service for them and the parents they would be babysitting for.”

The classes are sponsored by Thomas County Farm Bureau, Thomas County Health Department, Thomas County Extension, Colby Police and Colby Fire Department.

There is a minimal cost which will pay for the handbook, snacks and supplies, she said, and the deadline to register is Wednesday, July 2.

Registration packets can be picked up at the Thomas County Health Department in the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave., Colby, or downloaded by going to: www.thomas.ksu.edu. Registration is limited to 30 people.

Briefly

Blood drive July 9

The American Red Cross Blood Drive will visit Colby from noon to 6 p.m., Wednesday, July 9, at City Limits. “Each blood drive is a community event hosted by members of a specific community,” said Vicky Copess, coordinator. “Blood donors are heroes and the people who donate their time to host the blood drive are also heroes.” To make an appointment or help the day of the drive, call (620) 872-5075.

Cemetery sets hours

Following some minor theft incidents and recent acts of vandalism, the Beulah Cemetery Board of Directors made the decision to start closing the cem-

etry when the caretakers are not on the grounds. Effective Thursday, July 3, the cemetery will begin closing to the public at 4 p.m. and reopen at 8 a.m. the following day until further notice. For questions, call the cemetery office, 462-3188.

Commissioners to meet

The Thomas County Commissioners will have their end-of-the-month meeting at 9 a.m., Monday, in the commissioners’ room at the courthouse, 300 N. Court Ave., Colby. Phil Finley with the Workforce Center in Colby, is scheduled from 9 a.m. until 9:15 a.m., followed by Keith Baalman, who with talk about closing a non-existent road. At 9:30 a.m., the commissioners have an appointment with Dustin Daniels of Martin Tractor. From 9:45 a.m. to 10:10

a.m. Thomas County Treasurer Donita Applebury will discuss a postage meter. Lisa Molstad and Connie Walden of the public health office will meet from 10:15 to 10:45 a.m. about hiring a new administrator or nurse. County Attorney Candidate Preston Pratt will meet with the commissioners for an introduction session from 10:45 a.m. to 11 a.m. The meetings are open to the public.

Holiday trash scheduled

The Colby Sanitation Department has announced there will be no trash pick-up on Friday, July 4. Residential Friday trash will be picked up on Saturday. The department asks that residents have garbage on the curb by 8 a.m. Commercial Friday trash will also be picked up on Saturday.

City street project July 1-3

The City of Colby will be sealing streets on July 1, 2, and 3, according to city manager Carolyn Armstrong. The streets to be sealed are as follows: Strip on South Range in front of Montana Mike’s Restaurant, Davis Avenue from Sewell Avenue to Franklin Avenue, Franklin Avenue from Davis to College Drive, Court Avenue from Pine Street to Plum Avenue, Court Avenue from Pine Street to Hill Street, all of Court Terrace, all of Court Place and the Cul-de-sac in Austin Court.

Sealing will consist of a layer of oil being spread on the street surface followed by a layer of gravel. Armstrong says it would be helpful if the public could avoid the areas as much as possible.