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Viewers preparing for digital switch

By Shalee Roundtree

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The nation will switch to digital television in just two weeks, opening up radio channels for public safety and wireless, or cellular, communications, while giving viewers a better signal on a narrower bandwidth.

Under federal law, at midnight Tuesday Feb. 17, all broadcasting across the United States will be done with digital signals. Stations will shut down their old "analog" transmitters and use only digital signals.

The change will hit people who don't

have newer televisions — or cable or satellite service — hardest. Many will have to either buy a digital converter box or a new television set, experts say. If you have cable or satellite services, some equipment will handle the new signals. Experts say you may need to ask your provider.

Rural viewers, many of whom can't get cable and depend on antennas, may be affected the most. The payoff is a better picture and the potential for more services in the future.

The Federal Communications Commission, which licenses and regulates

broadcasting, says the change will free up parts of the broadcast spectrum. Digital broadcasting will offer consumers better picture and sound quality, the commission says on its website www.dtv.gov.

"There are some steps for consumers to take in preparation for the switch," said Clint Felvine, cable manager for S&T Communications in Brewster.

If you already own a set with a digital tuner or are have satellite television, you don't need to buy anything, he said. If you own an analog television set, using

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Show will explain options

Worried about digital television?

Smoky Hills Public Television plans a broadcast Thursday designed to help viewers when the industry converts to digital television this month.

"Digital Confusion Unraveled," scheduled for 7 p.m., will be a live broadcast featuring Smoky Hills employees and other television experts explaining the steps viewers may need

to take for the transition.

"With the digital conversion date just days away, we wanted to help our viewers with their transition needs," said Lawrence Holden, station general manager. "We'll have experts show our viewers how to go about setting up a new digital television set or conversion box, or how to use their antenna to receive the new digital signals."



Bob Withers of Colby got cake from Wal-Mart employee Amanda Brewster at the store's 20th anniversary bash on Monday.

Withers' daughter Roberta is one of seven employees recognized for being with the store since it opened Feb. 2, 1989.

Wal-Mart marks 20 years here

By Vera Sloan

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The Colby Wal-Mart store celebrated its 20th anniversary Monday with refreshments for customers, checks for area groups and recognition for seven employees who have worked at the store since it opened.

The company's first day of business here was Feb. 2, 1989.

The Colby store does its part in helping to make Colby a hub for shoppers in northwest Kansas, said Manager Sara Bryan. It also donated a total of \$32,000 last year to

support clubs and organizations in Thomas County and the surrounding area.

To mark the anniversary, she handed out checks for \$1,000 each on Monday to the Boy Scouts, Salvation Army, Colby Trap Club, the Knights of Columbus and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County.

Bryan is proud that she is a hometown girl. The daughter of Christina and the late Kenneth Weed, she grew up in Levant. She and her husband Al have two sons, age 11 and 9.

Bryan said she started at Wal-Mart as a teenager, working her way through college

as a sales associate in apparel.

She moved to other states, wherever her husband's trucking job took them, she said, and was always able to transfer to a store in the area, training in sales and management along the way.

She had worked in seven states, including Alaska, before applying for the manager's job here. She said she got it on her first try.

Seven employees, Bert Schmidt, Cheryl Barnett, Paula Tittel, Deb Mecsek, Dorothy Harry, Janet Wahlmeier and Kathy Arnberger, were recognized Monday for being with the store since opening day.

Council OKs third worker at new plant

By Andy Heintz

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The Colby City Council approved hiring of a third employee at the new wastewater treatment plant at its meeting Tuesday night.

Tim Hutfles was the only member to vote against the hiring. He said he was not comfortable hiring a new employee when the state is cutting back money it sends to cities.

Chad Applebury, lead operator at the plant, said it takes a lot more work to maintain the new plant than it took to take care of the old one, built in the 1930s.

Applebury said they only had to maintain four pumps in the old sewer plant, which is by the golf course on Country Club Drive.

Applebury said he and his helper are pulling double duty when it comes to mowing, as they are having to mow at the old and new plants. City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said that she knew maintaining the new plant would require more than three workers when it was being designed.

The new employee will be paid \$11 per hour.

KBC Dirt Ventures was approved to be the contractor for the demolition of a house at 345 S. School. The company offered to demolish the house for \$5,000. Hutfles Sand and Excavating Co. had bid \$9,865.

The council authorized Mayor Ken Bieber to sign an order of violation for a house at 1860 S. Range Ave. because of conditions allegedly in violation of the environmental code. Armstrong said it's not the house, but the yard that is not being maintained.

Building Official Richard Dick-

man reported the yard to have an overgrowth of trees, grasses, weeds and thistles. The report said the yard was littered with scrap iron, a steel tank, abandoned vehicles in a tree row and an abandoned dog trailer.

Dickman told the council that neighbors had complained about opossums, skunks and rats on the property. Dickman said that he had found a dead opossum there.

The house is owned by Frances D. Zoberst. She is an older woman who is unable to maintain the house by herself, Armstrong said, adding that Zoberst had never hired anyone to maintain the house.

The manager said plans for a water standpipe to be built on the south side of Willow just west of Country Club Drive are 85 to 90 percent completed. The standpipe would operate as a reserve, she said, maintaining pressure if the water tower on College Drive is out of service.

"If the water tower shuts down, we would have no way to maintain the city's water system," Armstrong said.

The pipe, 18 feet across and 140 feet tall, is estimated to cost \$525,000. Armstrong said the standpipe was the least expensive way to provide a backup.

The project has been approved by the Federal Aviation Administration and has been submitted to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to be reviewed, he said.

In other news, the council approved an agreement with Aviation Administration to pay for replacing bad concrete on the apron at the Colby Municipal Airport. The agency is shouldering most of the project's costs.

Middle School musicians, singers warm up for league festival

By Andy Heintz

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Colby Middle School band and choir students will get the chance to show off their talents at the annual Northwest Kansas League Music Festival on at 8 a.m.

next Wednesday at Colby Community College.

All students in the band and choir will be performing at the festival, said band teacher Stacey Williams. Students will also be able to do ensembles and solos at the event.

"The festival challenges and pushes

them," Williams said. "Performing in front of judges puts them out of their comfort zone."

Williams said most of her students handle the situation well.

Abby Friesen, a seventh grader, said she was looking forward to performing at the festival again.

"My favorite part of the festival is getting to perform and seeing what the judge's think," she said.

Sixth- and seventh-grade band students will be playing "Moto Continuo" by Robert W. Smith and "Too Beautiful for Words" by Rob Gris. The seventh and eighth grade will do "His Honor" by Hen-

ry Fillmore and "Where the Sun Breaks Through the Mist."

Choir students performing solos this year are Cheyenne Miller, Tomi Miller, Lauren Mountford, Alexa Schindler, Randee Skiles and Bailey Terrell.

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Briefly

Parent-teacher conferences set

Parent-teacher conferences were scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday in Colby schools. Parents should have received a card or phone call with an assigned time.

School book fair continuing

The Colby Grade School Parent-Teacher Organization's annual spring Scholastic Book Fair continues from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday. The fair offers new releases, award-winning titles, children's classics, interactive software, adult books and best sellers. For information, call the school at 460-5100.

Sealant, fluoride clinic for kids

Students in the dental hygienist program at Colby Community College will hold a sealant and fluoride clinic for kids 6 to 12 from 1-5 p.m. Friday in the

Health Sciences Building--+. Cost is \$7 per tooth for the first four. Parents can make an appointment by calling (785) 460-5438, but walk-ins are welcome.

Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has a male blue heeler puppy, 3 to 4 months old, and a male corgi-lab mix available for adoption. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.

Music Boosters plan supper

The Colby Music Boosters plan a soup supper dur-

ing the Colby-Oberlin basketball games from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Friday at the Community Building. Homemade chili, chicken noodle soup, desserts and drinks will be available for a donation.

Tax help at offered at library

Free tax help will be available for with low- and middle-income taxpayers, with special attention to those 60 and older, from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays beginning this week at the Pioneer Memorial Library. The program is sponsored by American Association of Retired Persons. Call 460-2645 for information.

Sign up now for food package

Registration is open for the Prairie Land Food Program until Friday at the State Farm Insurance office, 905 E. Fourth. Delivery will be Saturday, Feb. 21, at the Sacred Heart School gym, 1150 W. Sixth St. For

information, call Gene Griffen at 460-3579.

Remote-control racing starts

Racing for Christ with remote control cars will resume at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Colby First Baptist Church. Races are held the second and fourth Sundays of each month. A remote control car will be given away in April. Contenders need to be present to learn how to win. Anyone 10 years and up is invited. For questions, call Kent Higerd at 462-3440.

Commodity distribution Friday

U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities will be distributed from 1-2 p.m. Monday at the Retired Senior Volunteer Program office in Fike Park. Eligibility is based on federal income guidelines. Those not able to attend may send a signed permission slip with another person. For questions, call 462-6744.