

Weather  
Corner

National Weather Service  
**Tonight:** A slight chance of rain before 1 a.m., then a slight chance of rain and snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 28. Windy, with a northwest wind 30 to 35 mph decreasing to between 15 and 20 mph. Winds could gust as high as 45 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20 percent.  
**Tuesday:** A slight chance of rain and snow before 1 p.m., then a slight chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 45. Windy, with a northwest wind between 25 and 30 mph, with gusts as high as 40 mph. Chance of precipitation is 20 percent.  
**Tuesday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 26. Blustery, with a northwest wind 20 to 25 mph decreasing to between 10 and 15 mph. Winds could gust as high as 35 mph.  
**Wednesday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 56. West wind 10 to 15 mph becoming south.  
**Wednesday Night:** A slight chance of rain before 1 a.m., then a slight chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 29. Chance of precipitation is 20 percent.  
**Thursday:** A chance of snow before 1pm, then a chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 43. Chance of precipitation is 30 percent.  
**Thursday Night:** A chance of rain and snow. Cloudy, with a low around 26. Chance of precipitation is 50 percent.  
**Friday:** A 40 percent chance of snow. Cloudy, with a high near 38.  
**Friday Night:** A 30 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 24.  
**Saturday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 47.  
**Saturday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 25.  
**Sunday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 58.  
Friday: High, 69; Low 38  
Saturday: High, 75; Low 38  
Sunday: High, 73; Low 50  
Precip: Friday 0.00 inches  
Saturday 0.00 inches  
Sunday 0.00 inches  
Month: 0.00 inches  
Year: 0.64 inches  
Normal: 2.15 inches  
(K-State Experiment Station)

Home sales rise by 5.1% in February

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sales of previously occupied homes jumped unexpectedly in February by the largest amount in nearly six years as first-time buyers took advantage of deep discounts on foreclosures and distressed properties. Economists said sales, while still at levels not seen since 1997, may finally be coming back to life after declining sharply following the stock market plunge last autumn. Prices, however, are expected to keep falling well into the year. Tens of thousands of homes remain tied up in the foreclosure process and are not yet for sale. Plus, as the recession deepens and job losses mount, many buyers are likely to stay on the sidelines. “The four-letter word in the housing market is ‘jobs,’” said Nicolas Retsinas, director of Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies. “If you’re worried about having a job tomorrow, you’re not likely to buy a home now.” The National Association of Realtors said today that sales of existing homes grew 5.1 percent to an annual rate of 4.72 million last month, from 4.49 million units in January. It was the largest monthly sales jump since July 2003, with first-time buyers accounting for about half of all transactions. Sales had been expected to dip to an annual pace of 4.45 million units, according to Thomson Reuters. The results, which came after a steep decline in January, mean that sales activity has returned to December’s levels, but still remains lower than most of last year. “If January was a disaster for housing, February may be the rebound month,” wrote Joel Naroff, president of Naroff Economic Advisors. The sales figures don’t yet reflect the new \$8,000 tax credit designed to lure even more first-time buyers into the market. That should juice up early summer sales, but how much will depend on the overall condition of the U.S. economy. “If the economy stabilizes around midyear and financial conditions improve, then sales will probably begin to slowly increase as buyers step back into the market,” wrote JPMorgan Chase analyst Abiel Reinhart. “An important reason for this is that affordability has already increased sharply, both as a result of lower prices and lower mortgage rates.” The median sales price plunged to \$165,400, down 15.5 percent from \$195,800 a year earlier. That was the second-largest drop on

record and prices are now off 28 percent from their peak in July 2006. However, in a positive sign, seller asking prices are starting to rise in places like San Diego and Orange County, Calif., where declines have been severe, said Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the Realtors. That could be an early indication that prices are stabilizing in the most distressed parts of the country. Meanwhile, in contrast with the housing boom, when buyers took out ever-riskier loans and maxed out their home equity lines, “homebuyers are not over stretching” Yun said. “They want to stay within their budget.” The number of unsold homes on the market last month rose 5.2 percent to 3.8 million, a typical increase for the winter months. At February’s sales pace, it would take 9.7 months to rid the market of all of those properties. “Inventories are still high relative to sales rates, and would probably be even more so if all those wishing to sell their home actually had the house on the market instead of pulling it off in the face of rapidly eroding prices,” wrote Joshua Shapiro, chief U.S. economist at MFR Inc.



Volunteers Nick Wells (with back to camera) and wife Janet (on ladder) helped put the finishing touches on fresh paint in the new press box at the city ball fields last week. The project was spearheaded by the club, and members spent part of St. Patrick’s Day

Press box done soon

From “ROTARY,” Page 1t  
The second floor has a 16-foot counter for a scorekeeper, scoreboard operator and two radio announcers, with room for all. Bigger windows and a better ventilation system complete the package. The field serves Colby High School, American Legion and K-18 baseball teams. It is busy most days during spring and summer, for practice and scheduled games and tournaments. Larry Schlick, the general contractor, said it should be ready for use in a week to 10 days. Arensdorf said the club isn’t sure yet how much the work is going to cost, but the bill probably has gone up since the city required them to use an architect to draw up the plans. Other projects around Colby made possible by the Rotary Club are new bleachers at the ball fields, gazebos at the city parks and bus stop shelters for school children. The press box project originated with the club, with many local businesses and organizations donating money and materials, said Arensdorf. “Things are really shaping up out there,” said Kevin Cox, high school baseball coach.

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Human resources association explores interest in branch here

The Western Kansas Human Resource Management Association is looking for interest to warrant a chapter in far western Kansas. Currently, the closest meeting place for the association is in Hays, which is represented by the Salina chapter, and meets monthly. Those interested in this group

are invited to attend an “interest” meeting in Colby from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14, at the Fireside Lounge in the Colby Community College Student Union. Lunch will be provided. For questions, contact Linda Miller, Society of Human Resource Management, at (785) 222-2873.

Kansas Legislature renews open records law exemptions

TOPEKA (AP) — Senators have sent Gov. Kathleen Sebelius a bill to renew 30 exemptions to the Kansas Open Records Act. The 40-0 vote today renews exemptions through July 1, 2014. The Open Records Act generally requires government agencies to keep the records they collect

and compile accessible to the public, but it contains 47 exceptions allowing officials keep certain documents confidential. Dozens of additional exceptions are sprinkled throughout Kansas laws. State law requires legislators to review each exception at least once every five years.

Woman won’t bow to ‘bad luck’

From “WOMAN,” Page 1  
correct complications from him growing so fast. She said he grew from 5 foot, 9 inches to 6 foot, 4 inches in the past two years. “He simply outgrew the plate in his head,” she said, “and it caused him to have severe headaches and then black out.” Her son, a sophomore at St. Francis High School, has inherited his mother’s tenacity. Last year in June, he ran from St. Francis to Goodland and back to raise \$100,000 for kids with cancer and heart disease. He made the round trip in 11 1/2 hours. “Robert runs three miles a day now,” she said. “in preparation for his next benefit run, which he

plans to do when he is a senior. The next time, he will run from St. Francis to Goodland, then east to Colby, north to Atwood, and back to St. Francis. “He’s going to have to help me after my surgery, but he’s a good kid, and I know he will, because he already helps me a lot.”

A drunk driver ruined something precious. Amber Apodaca.

Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk.

Photo by Michael Anthony

U.S. Department of Transportation

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