

Hot weather deadly for kids in vehicles

A few minutes might not seem like a long time, but it can mean the difference between life and death to a child trapped in a hot car.

As temperatures begin to heat up, children are at a serious risk for heat stroke when left alone even for a few minutes in a closed vehicle, says the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Last year, at least 42 children across the United States died from heatstroke caused by being left or trapped in a car.

"A child is our most precious cargo, and drivers must know that these deaths and injuries are entirely preventable," said Jan Stegelman, director of Safe Kids Kansas. "No one ever thinks it would happen to them, and that is why it's essential to get this message out, especially as the weather starts heating up."

Heat is much more dangerous to children than it is to adults. When left in a hot vehicle, a child's core body temperature may increase three to five times faster than that of an adult. This could cause permanent injury or even death. Heat stroke occurs when the core body temperature reaches 104 degrees Fahrenheit. A core body temperature of 107 can kill.

"The inside of a vehicle can rise 19 degrees above the outside temperature in just 10 minutes," said

Stegelman. "After an hour, the temperature inside and outside of a vehicle can differ by 45 degrees or more — even if the window is left open a crack."

Safe Kids USA and General Motors created the Never Leave Your Child Alone program to educate families on the dangers kids face in hot vehicles.

According to research at San Francisco State University, even with relatively cool temperatures outside — 70 degrees — the inside of a car can reach a dangerous temperature in just minutes.

The research also revealed that more than half of these children were accidentally left behind in a parked car by parents or caregivers and nearly a third were trapped while playing in a vehicle.

Safe Kids suggests these tips:

- Teach children not to play in, on or around vehicles.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even with the window slightly open.
- Always lock a vehicle's doors and trunk — especially at home. Keep keys and remote-entry devices out of children's reach.
- Place something that you'll need at your next stop — such as a purse, a lunch, gym bag or briefcase — on the floor of the back seat by the child. This simple act could help prevent you from accidentally forgetting a child.

New business offers support for disabled

By Vera Sloan
Colby Free Press
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Northwest Support and Information Services, which helps disabled persons learn how to live on their own, is the newest office on Colby's Main Street.

Terry Drenner, a 16-year veteran of programs dealing with independent living centers, is founder and director of the service, with a 10-member board to assist him.

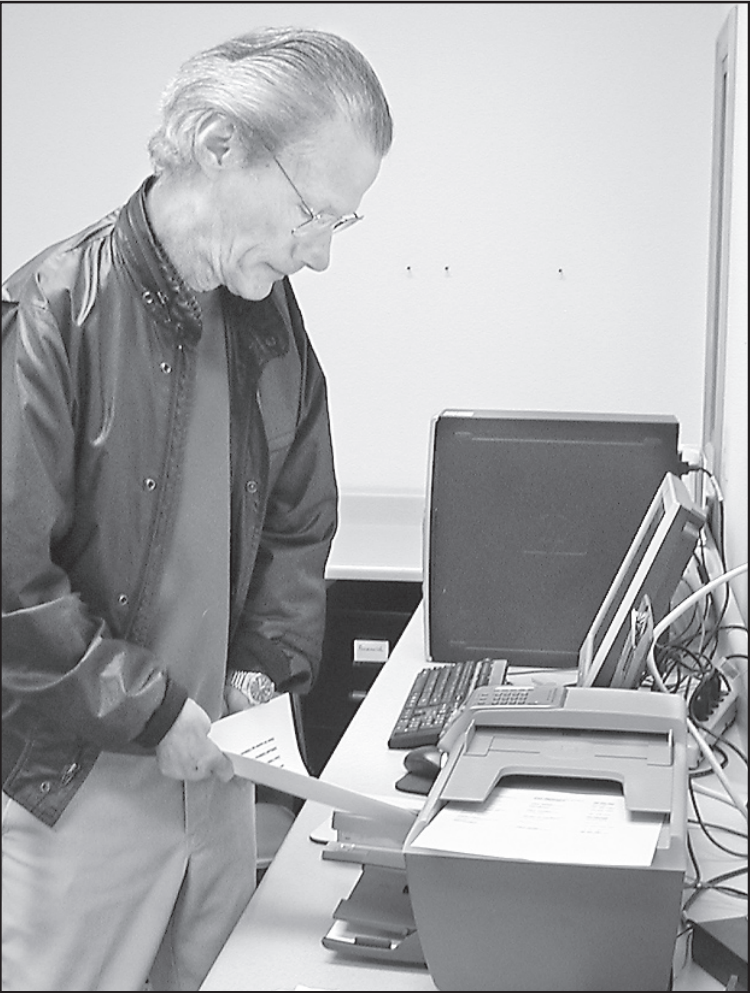
The office is at 640 N. Franklin Ave., in the former Past Times building.

"To begin with, we will serve clients in the nine northwest counties of Kansas," said Drenner, "with long range plans to go into southern Nebraska and eastern Colorado."

"We are just beginning to build the program. We don't actually do stuff for people, we teach them how to do it, and how to live independently."

Advocacy issues, job placement, mental and physical support, services for young and old, plus veterans, are all on the docket, and will be available on site, and in the home where needed, he said.

Doug Finley, a licensed master social worker on staff, said they will be providing counseling for the mentally and physically disabled and for the caregivers and families who go through



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

loss issues when a family member becomes disabled.

"We are researching options about more professional staff,

such as nurses, therapists, chiropractors and more," Finley said, "plus we will be a resource center for aging issues and children's issues."

"In the near future, the center hopes to have the professional staff they need so that some of the services can be billed to insurance," he said. "That will enable us to provide even more services."

"We also will focus on being an advocate for the client, so that their information doesn't get dropped and we will do a continuous follow up."

"A webbing approach would enable us to reach out to other agencies," said Finley.

The agency accepts donations and contributions. It has applied for a federal tax exemption, and donations could be funneled through Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development, Drenner said, "and that would make the donation tax deductible."

"There will be no discrimination based on a client's ability to pay," Finley said. "Where there's a need for services, we'll make every effort to get the client the help they need."

The service will have a garage sale from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday and from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday at the office.

For information and questions about the agency, call Drenner at (785) 460-1896.

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