



Watch out for work trucks



Flashing lights on a city truck failed to attract the attention of Leo Berens, 90, around 2 p.m. Monday afternoon, and his 1999 Chevy van crashed into the back of a survey crew's vehicle stopped on South Franklin Avenue, north of Colby High School. The crew was working on the site of the new city water

park. Berens was unhurt and the truck was unoccupied at the time. Officer Sam Steele of the Colby Police Department said the angle of the sun might have contributed to Berens' inability to see the flashers. Motorists need to be especially alert when there are work trucks on the street, he said.

VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Weathermen
guarantee
snowy holiday

By Kevin Bottrell
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Be careful what you wish for, especially when dreaming of a "White Christmas."

Northwest Kansas, including Thomas County, is under a winter storm warning. An incoming storm is expected to dump eight inches of snow by Friday, maybe more.

The National Weather Service expects a high near 35 degrees today, with rain starting sometime before midnight and turning to snow overnight. A layer of ice – less than a quarter inch – may form under the snow, which may accumulate up to two inches. The service estimates eight inches of snow could pile up over the week. Chances of new snow will be less by Christmas Day, with the sun

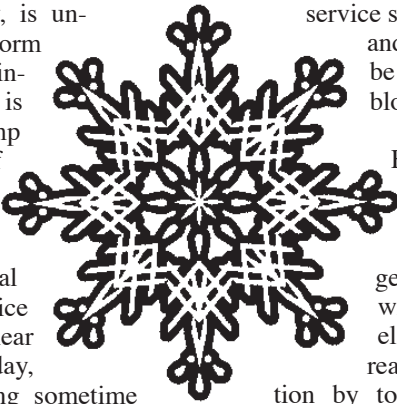
peeking out again on Saturday.

Winds up to 30 miles per hour – with possible gusts up to 40 – Wednesday and Thursday will cause "near blizzard conditions," blowing snow and low visibility.

The "winter storm warning" means snow is nearly certain, the service said, but amounts and conditions will be short of a full-blown blizzard.

Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan suggests that anyone with plans to travel make sure they reach their destination by tonight. Visibility could be cut to a mile in some places during the storm, and travel is not recommended Wednesday through Friday, she said.

Road conditions and closures are available online at www.kan-drive.org, at (866) 511-KDOT or by calling 511 from most land-line or cellular phones.



Hoxie accident
leaves one dead

A 22-year-old Oberlin student died in a head-on collision Monday night with a semitrailer rig loaded with grain about 15 miles south of Hoxie on K-23.

The victim, Lora Marietta, was apparently on her way home from Manhattan, where she was a student at Kansas State University.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Manuel Ortega, 51, of Garden City, was driving the truck south on K-23 with his son, Jesus, 27, about 6:25 p.m. At mile post 166, about 15 miles south of Hoxie, Trooper Ronald Boyd reported, Ortega moved to the left lane to pass a slow-moving vehicle in front of him. The rig collided head

on with Marietta's 2005 Chevrolet Cobalt, which was northbound.

The site is about three miles north of I-70 and just over the Sheridan-Gove county line. The road there is hilly, with short sight distances and many dips.

Marietta was pronounced dead at the scene, officers said. Decatur County Undersheriff Allen Marcum notified her family, the patrol said. She is the daughter of Alan and Judith Marietta of Oberlin.

Manuel Ortega was taken to the Sheridan County Hospital in Hoxie with possible injuries. Jesus Ortega was not injured but rode in the

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Lora Marietta

Paper prints early
for holiday weeks

The Colby Free Press is being delivered a day early today and again Wednesday so holiday advertising will be out for shoppers, and the newspaper staff and carriers can leave early on Christmas Eve.

The Wednesday Free Press for Dec. 23 is being delivered on Tuesday, and the Thursday paper on Wednesday this week only. No paper will be delivered Thursday,

and there will be no paper for Christmas Day on Friday.

Next week, papers will be printed and delivered Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. No Friday paper will be printed because of the New Year's holiday.

Regular schedules resume following the holidays. The Free Press will publish on Monday, Jan. 18, despite the Martin Luther King Day holiday.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Beverly Johnson won first place in the Colby Christmas lighting contest for her decorations at 825 W. Eighth St., which included lights around the house and yard as well as snowmen,

reindeer, trees and candy canes. Johnson won \$100. Colby Implement won first place in the commercial category.

Homes, businesses recognized for lights

By Andy Heintz

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When people start stringing up lights and decorating their houses and yards with cut-outs or blowups of Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, it's a sure sign that Christmas is right around the corner.

The Colby Promotion Committee makes sure to reward the folks who really get into the Christmas spirit with its annual lighting contest. Chairman Jeff Horlacher of Horlacher Jewelers said the Chamber has been holding the contest for about 10 years.

Every year, he said, judges from the committee drive through town surveying businesses and houses to find the ones best represent the December holiday tradition.

The committee picks first-place winner in

two categories, commercial and residential. This year, the judges looked at all the houses and businesses the night of Dec. 12.

The first-place winner in the residential category was Beverly Johnson at 825 W. Eighth St. In the commercial category, it was Colby Implement at 405 W. Horton Ave.

Johnson was rewarded with \$100 and Colby Implement got \$75. Horlacher said they won because of their creativity and the work they put into decorating.

The second- and third-place winners in residential and a second-place winner in commercial also received prizes. Second in residential went to Debbie Applebaugh at 885 Cherokee Drive and third to Dr. Lynn Kreider, Colby Community College president, at 670 N. Grant. Applebaugh received \$75 and Kreider \$50.

Fotogirl Photography took second in the commercial category and owner Michelle

Morris got \$50. The United Methodist Church took third in the commercial category.

The committee was impressed with several houses and businesses that didn't come in the top three, Horlacher said, including Darrell and Vallerie Wark at 580 Valley Drive, Jim Murray at 350 S. Grant Ave., Greg and Emily Griffin at 265 Walnut St., Maurice Phelps at 1130 S. Court Ave., the house at 425 Arrowhead St., Brent Menges at 545 N. Cherokee Drive and Ron and Linda Vrbas at 565 N. Cherokee, Jim and Terry Cousins at 1114 Terrace Drive, Pioneer Memorial Library, the college, Peoples State Bank, Colby Fertilizer and the city display in Fike Park.

Horlacher said many houses hadn't been decorated when the contest was judged because of the cold weather. He said since the contest ended, a lot more people have decorated their homes and people should drive around and take a look at them.

Briefly

County offering H1N1 flu shots

The Thomas County Health Department will offer H1N1 flu shots to everyone at a clinic from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and noon to 4:30 p.m. next Wednesday, Dec. 30, at the department's office, 350 S. Range Ave. No appointment is needed and there is no charge. For information, call the flu hot line at 460-4599 or the department office at 460-4596.

Library plans long weekend off

The Pioneer Memorial Library will be closed four days for Christmas, from Thursday to Sunday. For information, call the library at 460-4470.

Want to be a Master Gardener?

It's time to sign up for Master Gardener Training to be held in Colby in February and March. The deadline is Thursday and the cost is \$90. For information

or to register, contact the Thomas County Extension office at 460-4582.

City trash schedule to change

The Colby Sanitation Department will have the day off Thursday and Friday for Christmas. Thursday's trash route will be picked up Wednesday, said Public Works Manager Chris Bieker, and Friday's route will be picked up Saturday. People on these routes should have their trash on the curb by 8 a.m. For information, call Public Works at 460-4420.

County closing for two days

The Thomas County courthouse, office complex and landfill will be closed Thursday and Friday for Christmas. The transportation van will not run Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. The county treasurer's office will be closed Thursday, Dec. 31, also.

For information, call the county clerk's office at 460-4500.

Fatherhood program to start soon

The Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center's "24/7 Dad" fatherhood program will be offered again starting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 5, at the First Presbyterian Church in Colby. For information, call the center at 460-8177.

Hospital plans birthing classes

Citizens Medical Center will hold a four-week series of childbirth education classes from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursdays beginning Jan. 7 for women due to deliver before May. The partner who will be with the mother during labor should attend. Classes will be held on the hospital campus. The next classes will begin April 1. For information or to register,

call Jeanene Brown in the Education Department at (785) 460-4850.

Hospital auxiliary needs help

The Citizens Medical Center Auxiliary is looking for volunteers to greet visitors, operate the gift shop and help patients and their families, among other things. If you'd like to get involved, call Tama Unger at (785) 460-1214 or Mary Smith at (785) 462-3387.

