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Panel gives examples of alcohol abuse

By Aubrey Spencer
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The Thomas County Coalition's Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking drew a crowd of more than 100 Monday evening at the Colby Community College's Frahm Theater.

Dr. W.G. Romine II of Redeeming Love Ministries served as master of ceremonies.

Sue Evans, Executive Director of Northwest Kansas Council on Substance Abuse, welcomed those in attendance saying the meeting was just one of many that would be taking place across the United States.

"There are 1,773 town hall meetings taking place coast to coast during this week with 33 happening in communities across Kansas," she said.

The evening's activities kicked off with a 20-minute video, entitled "Brain Scan," showing a study on the impact alcohol has on a young person's brain. The video noted that people in their early twenties show the greatest impairment in their abilities to learn. According to the study, alcohol abuse has a significant effect on memory.

A four-person panel of professionals including Thomas County Sheriff Rod Taylor; Brenda Platt, probation officer with Northwest Kansas Juvenile Services; Kevin, a young recovering alcoholic; and Colby Police Chief Randy Jones shared statistics related to underage drinking and some dramatic personal examples of the effects of alcohol.

Taylor said he's been in law enforcement for 43 years. He discussed the personal effects alcohol has had on his family, taking the life of his brother. Taylor said his brother, who also served on patrol, began drinking at the age of 15. He eventually lost his job with the highway patrol and his ability to function for himself. His wife and two kids left him, and he ended up taking his own life.

"Alcohol and addiction can take anyone," Taylor said. "It can be your best friend sitting right next to you."

Platt said she supervises all the youth on probation in Northwest Kansas, currently 250. She said they come from all walks of life and have committed all types of crimes. Some that involved alcohol included a rape, a car crash that killed one offender's eight-year old brother, and a 14-year-old pregnant girl who has no idea who the father is. Those she deals with have all made a bad choice that will haunt them the rest of their life, she said.

"I can almost guarantee you that alcohol is at the foundation of most crimes," Platt said.

She said it is important for parents to reinforce values on their kids. Don't treat it lightly the first time they come home drunk, she said. Platt also pleaded with the teens in the audience.

"Kids, respect kids. Put your foot down and make the effort to stop one another from drinking," she said.

A young person named Kevin shared his experience with underage drinking, saying he had his first sip of alcohol at the age of 11. By 13, he drank regularly every weekend. Kevin said he got in fights all the time and lost friends and girlfriends. He drank too much, often blacking out, he said, and couldn't remember many of the things he did.

"Alcohol is the gateway to other drugs," Kevin said. "You don't ever want to end up in the back-seat of a cop car on your way to the sheriff's office."

Kevin said he's been on probation for two years now. He's faced a host of consequences resulting from his alcohol use including fines, detention centers, rehabilitation and time away from his family.

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Recycling center ready to take clothing, shoes

By Vera Sloan
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Lynette Koon, director of the Thomas County Regional Recycling program, announced Tuesday that the recycling center on East College Drive in Colby will soon begin taking clothing and shoes for recycling. Taking clothing out of the stream of waste going to landfills, she said, can be a huge space saver.

The new drop off bin will be ready to be put in place as soon as it has a coat of paint, and should be ready to receive drop-offs as early as next week. Koon said clothing and shoes must be free from any dampness, placed in a plastic bag and tied with a twisty or rubber band. Anything that is damp will be subject to mold and cannot be used.

"We are in no way meaning to compete with the local thrift stores, nor do we want to replace their services," Koon said. "We are more of an overflow outlet for those items of clothing."

It's not uncommon for thrift stores, charities and non profits to collect more donations of used clothing than they can use, she said. Many times, when donors are turned away at the door of one of those

establishments, they put the clothes in the dumpster for a trip to the local landfill. There ends up being trailer loads of clothing at landfills in the states with no tipping fees for individuals or charities.

"Shoes are especially welcomed for drop off," Koon said, "because they will go to a mission in Africa where people are prone to diseases from going barefooted. The information we've received is that there is a worm that causes all kinds of infections in people who have no shoes."

The need is great, she pointed out, so great in fact, that truck loads of shoes and clothing can be seen traveling through the country with guards atop the load to protect it as it makes it way into the inner countries of Africa. She said the mission has a motto that says, "let us find your old shoes, a new pair of feet."

Most shoes are acceptable, she said, except for high heels because they don't work well in sand. Even so, American footwear remains very popular around the world. It is best to keep the shoes in pairs.

Koon stressed that people should use their churches and local thrift stores who collect clothing items first, because the clothes brought to the recycle center will not stay local, but will be shipped out.

Governor says he's optimistic on economy, revenue estimates

By John Milburn
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson said Wednesday there's reason to believe the state's economy is beginning to improve.

Declines in the February unemployment rate, including first-time claims for benefits, along with better revenue collections in March are reason for optimism, the governor told the media.

"We continue to make progress with the Kansas economy but we still face challenges," Parkinson said. "There are some bright spots out there."

But despite the improvements, the governor, a Democrat, said he and the Republican-controlled Legislature still face a daunting task in closing a projected \$467 million budget shortfall.

The Department of Revenue announced that tax collection exceeded estimates by \$12 million in March, but was still down \$92.8 million for the current fiscal year that ends June 30.

"The March revenue numbers are encouraging," Parkinson said after the revenue report was released. "It's the first time since November that our revenue receipts have exceeded estimates. However, we are by no means out of the woods."

Unemployment dipped to 6.8 percent in February from 7.2 percent in January. About 1.4 million Kansas residents were employed in February, while nearly 103,000 were actively seeking work. The unemployment rate was 6.2 percent in February 2009.

It is uncertain whether Parkinson and legislators will be forced to make additional state spending cuts with three months left in the budget year.

Legislators began a long break early Wednesday without approving a preliminary budget for 2011, which Parkinson and Senate GOP leaders said indicated the complexity of the financial crisis.

Parkinson and Senate leaders were critical of the House's budget proposal, which makes additional

spending cuts to education and pushes potential property tax increases on school districts. It also leaves the state with \$302 million in reserve on June 30, 2011.

"I don't think that's the responsible way to deal with the problem," said Sen. John Vratil, a Leawood Republican.

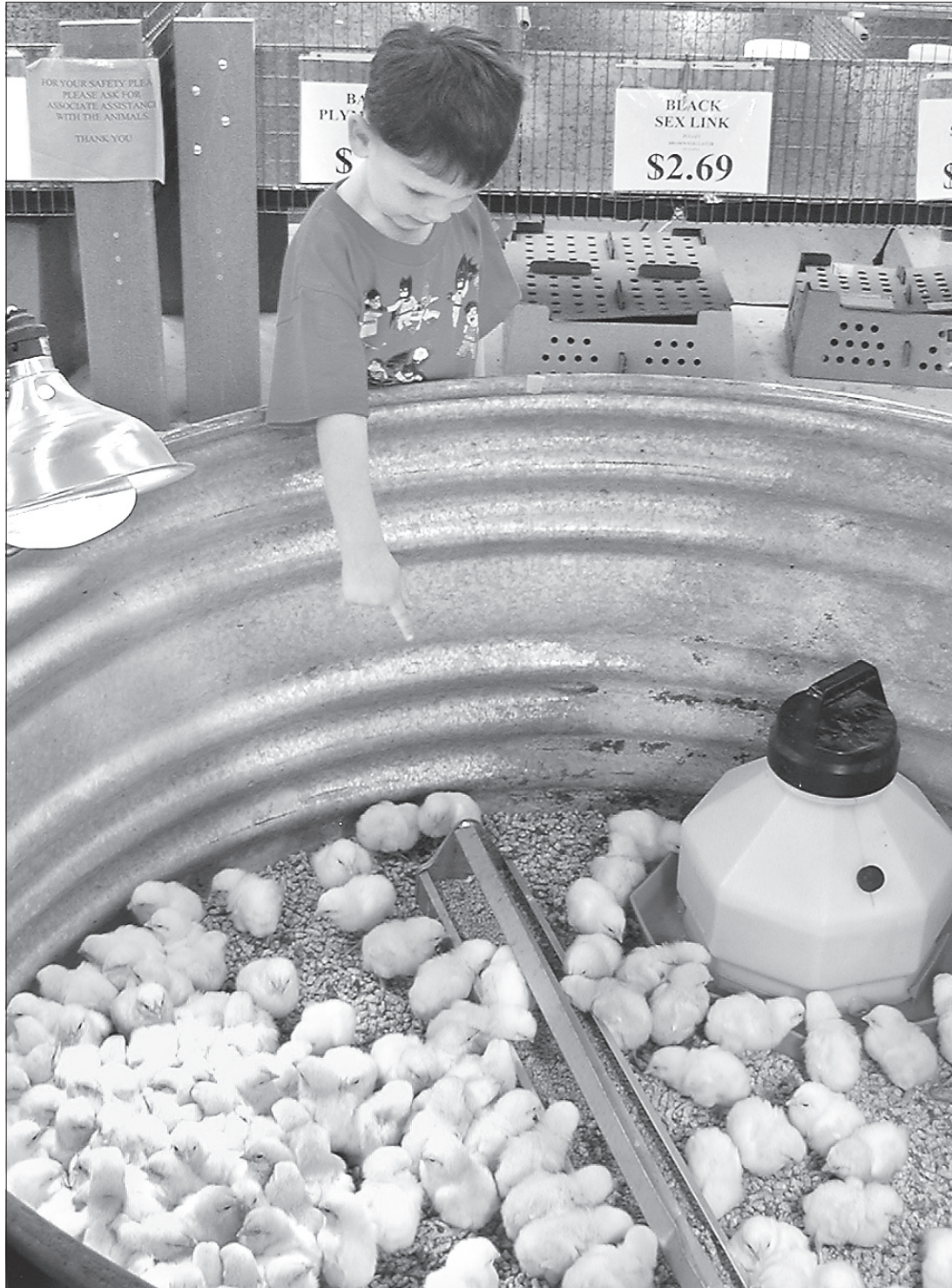
Senate President Steve Morris said he was hoping a revenue package would emerge during the session, but the tax committee failed to agree on anything.

"You have to make adjustments," said Morris, a Hugoton Republican.

Policymakers will get a clearer picture of future state revenues when economists meet April 16 — the day after taxes are due — to give the official estimate of money available for 2011.

Senate Ways and Means Chairman Jay Emler said he was bringing his panel back early to begin writing the budget and the tax package. The entire Legislature returns April 28 with 75 of the 90 days of the session already done.

I want that one



Three-year-old Bryant Allen pointed out his favorites of the new baby chickens at Orcheln's on Wednesday. Orcheln's currently has ducks, rabbits and chicks all for sale. Allen is the son of Tammy Allen of Colby.

Forensics team takes second in Oakley

The Colby High School forensics team won second place in the Northwest Kansas League meet in Oakley on Monday, earning 283 points. Quinter got first place with 378 points and Oberlin got third with 269 points.

Individual scores:
Inform: Bailey Koerperich, second.

first.
Extemp: Michael Tubbs, first, league champion; Rachel Lamm, third, league champion; Jerad Nally, fourth.
Oration: Kate Ostmeyer, fourth; Seth Bredemeier, fifth.
Humorous Solo: Gray Henry, second.

Solo: Cameron McLaughlin, fifth.
Prose: Amanda Barnum, fifth.
Poetry: Christina Ostmeyer, second; Gabby Brown, third.
IDA: Brock Wagoner and Gray Henry, third; Christina Ostmeyer and Cameron McLaughlin, fifth.

Briefly

Landfill changes hours

The Thomas County Landfill began its summer hours today. It will be open from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. The landfill will also be closed Sunday for Easter. For information, call the landfill at 462-8139.

Church to hold pancake feed

The Colby Berean Church will hold a pancake and sausage feed from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building. Donations will be accepted to help pay for church members' upcoming mission trip to India. For information, call Jim Myers at 462-9665.

Easter egg hunt Saturday

The College Drive Assembly of God church will hold their Easter egg hunt for children 10 and un-

der from 1 to 2:15 p.m. Sunday at the church, on the corner of College Drive and Franklin Avenue. Doors open for registration at 12:45 p.m. Children under 5 must be accompanied by an adult. For information, call the church office at 462-8234.

Chronic disease classes offered

Citizens Medical Center is offering six weeks of free classes to help people with chronic diseases optimize their lives for healthy living. Classes will be from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. beginning Monday in the board room at the hospital. For information or to reserve a seat, call Courtney McCarty or Jeanene Brown at (785) 460-4849.

Visit kindergarten Tuesday

Colby Grade School will have visitation for incoming kindergarten students and parents at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Colby Grade School Auditorium. For

information, call the school office at 460-5100.

Get prom dresses next week

There will be a spring formal dress sale from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday at the First Presbyterian Church, 515 W. Fourth St. The proceeds will go to Genesis Thomas County and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. For information, call Sue Draper at 460-6332

Birth classes start next week

Citizens Medical Center's four-week series of childbirth education classes, have been delayed one week. They will be from 7 to 10 p.m. beginning next Thursday at the hospital for women who are due to deliver before August, along with their labor support partner. There is a \$50 fee for materials. For information, call Jeanene Brown in the hospital's education department at (785) 460-4850.

City council meeting moved

The Tuesday meeting of the Colby City Council has been moved to the Little Theater in the basement of the Community Building, 285 E. Fifth St., because the council is expecting high attendance from the community. The meeting will start at 7:30 p.m. as usual. For information, call City Hall at 460-4400.

Music program next Thursday

The Colby Grade School kindergarten will present "A Day in the County" at 7 p.m. next Thursday in the grade school auditorium. For information, call Jennifer Koel at 460-5100.

