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The colors of spring



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Warming temperatures and plenty of moisture the past few weeks have been good for Colby's trees, like this redbud and the plum and locust trees at Fike Park. The National Weather

Service is predicting more thunderstorms throughout the week and weekend.

County says training 'inadequate'

By Vera Sloan
Colby Free Press
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More problems with new software took up much of the Thomas County commissioners' time on Monday, when they worked through the lunch hour to complete agenda items and discuss both purchases and problems with purchases.

Issues with the new software continue to plague the county, leaving offices of the county treasurer and clerk to the point of total confusion.

"I was over \$80,000 out of balance when I tried to balance out the March books," said Treasurer Donita Applebury. "When I call Computer Information Concepts (the vendor), they changed the figures around and it all balances, but what I need to know is where they are bringing those figures from to get it to balance."

"I'm the one that has to explain it to the auditors."

County Clerk Shelly Harms said the accounts payable module, which tracks and pays county

bills, still has problems. She said she feels they can be worked out, but the going is slow. Her assistant deputy, Kristi Mann, said she feels all new programs are going to be difficult in the beginning, but the problems will be worked out in time.

Commission Chairman Kent Christiansen asked if the confusion was a software problem or a training problem. Both departments agreed it is a training issue.

"I think what has happened," said Harms, "is that the company is understaffed and they are trying to train too many counties at one time. One of the major issues, not being able to run a quarterly report, is something I heard from several counties when I was at a meeting in Wichita last week, so we're not the only one having issues. The trainers are coming again next week, and we're documenting everything."

Walter Hill, director of High Plains Mental Health out of Hays, was at the meeting to thank the county for holding up its end of

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Candidates to debate on television Monday

It's your chance to meet the candidates for the 1st Congressional District seat when Smoky Hills Public Television airs a live forum at 7 p.m. on Monday, with a repeat scheduled at 5 p.m. Sunday, May 9.

The candidates will answer questions from the Fort Hays State University chapter of the Collegiate Farm Bureau, Young Democrats and College Republicans, the American Democracy Project and the Hays Area Chamber of Commerce. The audience will be able to ask questions as well, if time allows.

The forum is being held in the Fort Hays Memorial Union. Kent Steward, director of the Office of University Relations, will be the moderator.

All of the candidates for the First District have been invited to participate in the political forum, including Republicans Jim Barnett, Emporia; Sue Bol-dra, Hays; Tim Huelskamp, Fowler; Tracey Mann and Monte Shadwick, Salina; Marck Cobb, Galva; and Rob Wasinger, Cottonwood Falls; and Democrat Alan Jilka of Salina.

Soda tax fizzling in Legislature

By John Hanna
AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Soda bottlers and distributors lobbied legislators Tuesday against a proposed surcharge on sugary drinks, as a Senate committee worked on a state budget that's likely to require raising taxes.

The Ways and Means Committee is drafting a budget allowing the state to spend more than \$13 billion during the fiscal year that begins July 1. Members already have conceded that its not likely to balance, requiring them to consider tax proposals later this week.

The committee had hoped to finish its plan on Tuesday, but disagreements about social services slowed its work, which now will spill into Wednesday.

State officials and economists are projecting a \$510 million gap

between anticipated revenues and spending commitments. A proposed penny-per-teaspoon tax on sugar in canned and bottled beverages is among the revenue-raising ideas before legislators.

The prospects of such a tax — new for Kansas and relatively rare across the country — brought dozens of employees of bottling and distribution companies to the Statehouse. Some wore yellow "SAY NO" stickers.

"We're concerned," said Kevin Morris, a vice president for the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. in Lenexa. "It would result in lost jobs."

Committee Chairman Jay Emler, a Lindsborg Republican, is predicting that the panel's proposed budget will require at least \$350 million in tax increases.

Members of the GOP-dominated committee so far have been unwilling to seek further cuts in aid

to public schools, an idea Democratic Gov. Mark Parkinson also opposes. School aid consumes half of the state's general tax dollars.

Legislators are under increasing pressure from educators and advocates for the disabled and needy to increase taxes to avoid cutting schools and social services.

"Let us all stand together to save Kansas for the future of our children and grandchildren, in ways that resemble the state we are proud to call home," one coalition, Kansans for Quality Communities, said Tuesday in a letter to legislators.

A key issue for committee Democrats is reversing previous cuts in social services. Sen. Janis Lee, a Kensington Democrat, said legislators will face criticism for any

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JUDY ROGERS/Golden Plains

Golden Plains students Isaac and Jonathan Broeckelman performed their duet, "The History of Television, Condensed," before the high school play in March. They placed first at the league forensics meet in Weskan and will be performing at state in Greensburg.

Bulldog duo are league champs

By Sandra Galvan
Golden Plains High School

Two Golden Plains High School students became Western Kansas Liberty League forensics champions when they placed first at the league meet in Weskan with the duet acting performance.

Brothers Isaac and Jonathan Broeckelman performed their comedic piece, "The History of Television, Condensed," placing first in both preliminary rounds and the finals April 7 in Weskan.

Isaac was competing for the first time in informative speaking with a piece entitled "My Game of Inches." He placed first and second in the pre-

liminary rounds and sixth in the finals.

Jonathan did extemporaneous speaking for the first time, placing first and second in the preliminary rounds and second in the finals. This qualified him to compete in the state Class 1A Speech Championships on May 1 in Greensburg.

Brandy Gilbert competed in poetry with "The Most Beautiful Flower." She did not place high enough in the preliminary rounds to make the finals.

The Broeckelmans will be competing at the state Speech Festival, also May 1, in Salina with their

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Briefly

Offices to close for lunch

The Thomas County Clerk's office and the county road and bridge department will be closed during the noon hour for the rest of April because of software training. Both departments will conduct business from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For information, call the clerk's office at 460-4500.

Scouts looking for faded Glory

Bring your tattered, torn and faded Old Glory to the Pioneer Memorial Library through Friday, April 30. Colby Girl Scout Troop 165 plans a U.S. flag disposal drive. The Scouts remind everyone that flags should be destroyed if they are torn, dirty, repaired to a point where they are no longer rectangular, faded or in general disrepair. For information, call Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer at 460-3298.

Methodists to walk for hunger

To help fight world hunger, the Colby United

Methodist Church is sponsoring a "Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty," or CROP Walk, at 2 p.m. Sunday at Fike Park. Participants will walk around the park for donations. Refreshments will be served. For information, call the church office at 460-2761.

4-H to show dogs Sunday

The Thomas County 4-H Dog Obedience group will hold a spring dog show at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at the Heartland School gymnasium. The public is invited. For information, call the Extension office at (785) 460-4582.

Trooper to teach self defense

Colby Community College is offering a women's self defense class at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Room 106 of the Student Union, taught by Trooper Tod Hileman of the Kansas Highway Patrol. The Thomas County Farm Bureau will provide refreshments and

door prizes. For information, call Shanda Mattix at 460-5464.

Heartland spring concert soon

Heartland Christian School will have its spring music program at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 29, in the school gym. The concert will feature the school's bands and choirs. Preconcert music by Heartland students will begin at 6:30 p.m. For information, call the school at 460-6419.

Brewster offers garden training

The Brewster Recreation Department and the K-State Extension Master Gardeners will offer landscape training sessions at 7 p.m. the next three Thursdays at Hunter Hall in Brewster: this week, Extension agent Clint Milliman, on composting and Earth Day; April 29, Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities by agent Dana Belshe; and May 6, Trees for Northwest

Kansas by Jim Strine, state forester. For information, call the Sherman County Extension office at (785) 890-4880.

Scouts to take out the trash

Venture Scout Crew 157 will be helping the disabled with collecting e-waste — unwanted electronics — next Wednesday. Crew members will be available to pick up waste for those who are physically unable to. For information, call Jan Barnum at 462-6503.

