

More people visited last year

It's nearly February and the House and Senate are in session with Governor Brownback now at the helm.

The Travel Industry Association of Kansas is holding their Day on the Hill, Wednesday, Feb. 9. Tourism is the third largest industry in Kansas, infusing \$7.2 billion into the state's economy in 2009. Each Kansas visitor spends about \$238, every 203 visitors creates a job in Kansas, each visitor generates \$112 in wages paid directly to workers in tourism, each visitor adds about \$181 to gross state product and one in every nine Kansas citizens owes his or her job to tourism.

Gov. Brownback is planning to move the travel and tourism department out of the Department of Commerce and placing it with Wildlife and Parks forming a department called Wildlife, Parks and Tourism under Secretary Robin Jennison. He is scheduled to talk with us at noon while we are in Topeka.

In Colby, the transient guest tax collections are in for the fourth quarter of 2010 and we are pleased to report that they are up by over 16 percent from the same quarter in 2009. We finished the year with more than a 6 percent increase over 2009. We are pleased that our hotels are friendly and hospitable and appreciate working with them. We are also pleased to have two new hotels for visitors stopping in Colby.

Congratulations to the staff of Prairie Museum of Art and History for their new permanent exhibit, "Over Here! Over There! Honoring Those Who Serve." This exhibit features local stories and artifacts of our service men and women.

If you have not yet visited the "Ann Frank: Story of our Time" exhibit at the museum, I am en-



Leilani Thomas

• On the Road Again!

couraging you to do so before it leaves Tuesday, Feb. 15. This is an emotional exhibit and still has a very important message for each of us today.

The first two sessions of the Thomas County Youth Leadership 2011 program have been completed, although the second was shortened by the ice storm. This enthusiastic class is thoroughly enjoying the hands-on exercises demonstrating leadership capacities of the twenty-first century. Two activities which seemed to be most enjoyed and an eye opener were the diversity activity and listening exercise. The class also enjoyed a tour of the Colby Fire Department.

The class will meet again Wednesday at the Thomas County Office Complex and the final session will be at Colby Community College Wednesday, Feb. 16, when they will be working with the Criminal Justice class. They have begun discussing their class project.

There are several special activities in Colby during February. Saturday, Feb. 5, there is a free pancake feed as part of the Take Charge Colby Challenge. Enjoy pancakes and register to win a 46" high definition TV. We would like to see everyone in the 67701 zip code at this special event as we compete against Goodland, Hoxie, Oakley and WaKeeney for a grand prize of \$100,000 for our community. The Miss Kansas Teen Rodeo Party and crowning celebration for Katera Harter will be held at 6:30

p.m. Saturday, Feb. 5, at the Colby American Legion.

The Bill Voss Novice Wrestling Tourney comes to Colby High School at 9 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 12.

That evening the Northwest Kansas Foundation for Hope is holding their annual benefit. The evening begins with a social at 6:30 p.m. at City Limits Convention Center,

entine's Day.

There are a couple of special programs this month. Prairie Museum of Art and History is featuring Dr. Leo Oliva for its *Food for Thought* series at noon on Thursday, Feb. 17. Dr. Oliva's topic will be "Kansas Military Forts."

Pioneer Memorial Library is holding a brunch at 10:30 a.m. Friday the 18th, with author Tom Averill discussing his book "What Kansas Means to Me." The library will also be holding its annual



RICK DICKMAN/City of Colby
City workers unloaded thousands of compact florescent light bulbs at the City Hall to be given out for the Take Charge Challenge.

followed by dinner at 7, an auction lasting about an hour and then a dance featuring Jimmy Dee at 9 p.m. Tickets are available from Pat Sloan at Homeland Realty.

Pride of the Prairie Orchestra has a concert scheduled for 3 p.m. Sunday the 13th at Colby High School. Chocolate and All that Jazz will be held at 7 p.m. Monday the 14th at Pioneer Memorial Library. You are invited to enjoy the Colby Community College jazz band while eating delicious chocolate desserts with friends. What a yummy way to spend Val-

Book Lovers book sale Thursday through Saturday, Feb. 24-26.

All of these special events are being held besides high school and college basketball and wrestling competitions. As always, take advantage of as many of these entertaining activities as you are able. Please do take time to view the Ann Frank exhibit. It is well worth your time.

Leilani Thomas is director of the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau, a long-time civic volunteer and a passionate observer of the tourism industry.

Georgia considering Sunday alcohol sales bill

SHANNON McCAFFREY
Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) – The push to allow Sunday alcohol sales in Georgia's grocery and convenience stores is being revived with new legislation filed in the state Senate.

And new Republican Gov. Nathan Deal reiterated Tuesday that if the measure ends up on his desk he'll sign it, so long as it allows local

communities to ask voters to decide. "I believe that's what democracy is all about," Deal said after a legislative breakfast held by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. "I would not veto it if the legislature passes it in a fashion that meets that criteria." Georgia is one of just three states that ban the Sunday sale of alcohol at stores. The other two are Connecticut and Indiana. Previous efforts to allow Sunday alcohol

sales in Georgia have stalled amid a veto threat from Deal's predecessor, Sonny Perdue, a Christian conservative who did not drink. With Perdue gone, backers of Sunday sales say its odds of passing have soared. Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers said the Sunday sales measure has "a greater chance of passing this year than ever before."

Make money stretch

New Year's resolutions can bring change, but one – a personal financial review – also may help build savings and increase financial security.

With tax preparation a given this time of year, Carol Young, a Kansas State University Research and Extension financial management specialist, encourages taking extra time to review the 2010 money that came in – and the money that went out.

The beginning of a new year also is a great time to review short- and long-term financial goals, said Young.

"Goals are important road maps," she said. "If you don't know where you'd like to go, you probably won't get there."

Saving for a specific purpose, a newer, more dependable vehicle, an update in the family room, exercise equipment or a vacation, for example, can spur a lifelong savings habit.

"Doing the extra paperwork can pay off," said Young, who offered basic money management tips to know where your money has gone and see if you want to make any changes for the future.

- Make a list of your financial goals for at least the next year, and, ideally, the next five, 10 and 20 years. Post these in a prominent place in your home as a daily reminder to help avoid impulse buying and build resolve for saving.

- Be clear about income available to spend, save or pay off debt.

- Identify and plan to pay fixed expenses and payments first, such as mortgage, rent, insurance, car or truck payment, school loan, etc.

- Does money seem to disappear? Track miscellaneous cash, debit and credit card expenses for seven to 30 days. Many who do this are amazed at the results.

- Sign up for direct deposits to reduce the temptation to spend.

- Pay yourself first via automatic deposits to an emergency fund, personal savings and retirement accounts at work or set up separately.

- Pay all bills promptly to avoid late fees, more interest or a higher interest rate. If paying down credit card debt, pay at

least the minimum payment required on all cards and as much extra as possible to pay off the debt as quickly as possible.

- Consider paying for routine or small purchases with cash or a debit card, rather than a credit card, which gives a false sense of available income and buying power.

- If using a credit card, try not to charge more than can reasonably be paid off in one billing cycle, usually a month.

- When making a major purchase such as a new appliance or car repairs, paying with a credit card can offer some leverage to dispute payment if the purchase is faulty or fails to live up to advertised claims.

- Weigh carefully the benefits for cash back or rewards credit cards. Charging more than you can reasonably pay each month builds interest charges likely to be greater than any reward.

- Stop asking for cash back from check or debit card purchases. Such money can easily disappear.

- Build an allowance for each member of the household into a money management plan; having so much discretionary money available – and no more – can help lower unnecessary spending.

- Paid off car or truck loan? Continue making car payments to yourself in an interest-bearing account to ease the sting when it's time to replace one.

- Make a spending and saving plan to prioritize long-term needs like replacing a refrigerator or buying tires.

- Count change in containers around the house periodically and deposit the money in an interest-bearing account.

- Invite the family to brainstorm about ways to save – turning off lights, grouping errands, refilling water bottles instead of buying drinks, checking a video out of the library rather than going to a movie or making a pizza at home rather than eating out.

Money management and savings tips are available at Kansas State University Research and Extension county offices and at www.ksre.ksu.edu/financial-management/ or www.kansas-saves.org.

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