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## Job will close K-25 bridge until July

By Steve Haynes

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Kansas Department of Transportation engineers will be at an open house Wednesday to talk about replacement of a 60-year-old bridge south of Colby that will require closing K-25 for about 3 1/2 months, from March 15 to about July 2.

The bridge, over the North Fork of the Solomon River, is about 2 1/2 miles south of Interstate 70. The timing likely means it will be closed during wheat harvest, but state and county officials plan to have two detours ready to route traffic around the work.

The open house will run from noon to 2 p.m. at the meeting room of the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave. Three engineers, plus other department county officials, will be present to talk with people.

A spokesman said materials will detail the phasing of the bridge construction, the



KRISTEN BRANDS/Kansas Department of Transportation

This old steel bridge over the North Fork of the Solomon River south of Colby will be replaced, closing the road for more than three months this spring.

official state detour and local alternatives and answer questions on the access to the county roads around the project.

People can stop by any time during the open house, because no formal presentation is scheduled. Anyone who can't attend should contact the department's district office in Norton for copies of take-home materials, which will be avail-

able after the meeting. Comments are welcome any time, said Kristen Brands, district manager of public affairs.

The road south of Colby will be closed at the same time as another contractor is rebuilding K-25 between U.S. 40 and Russell Springs. That section of road also will be closed.

The "official" detour on paved state highways follows I-70 south to the north Oakley exit, then U.S. 83 to Scott City and K-96 west to Leoti. However, Thomas County officials have been improving County Road 20, or Country Club Drive, from I-70 south to County Road N, also known as Route 388. They can get back on K-25 south of the bridge.

Commissioner Paul Steele said the state gave the county \$100,000 to improve the informal detour. County crews graded the surface to improve drainage, then packed in tons of asphalt millings to provide an all-weather surface. The township-main-

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## Beef director explains plan for college farm

By Kayla Cornett

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The Colby Community College trustees during their monthly meeting Monday heard a report from Dr. Marcy Ward, beef cattle program director and instructor, about a farm improvement plan she and others have been developing.

Ward said she and Shanda Matix, horse program director and equestrian coach; Jim Latoski, livestock judging coach; Allen Russell, agriculture and economics instructor and rodeo coach; and Adam Frisch, farm manager, have put together the plan, based on feedback from contractor Mike Woofter about a year ago on the condition of the college farm. Ward said she was the only one who could attend the meeting, so she appeared to ask support from the board and the college.

She said Woofter said he would help them with the project once the proposal was complete. Ward first talked about the farm's current condition. She said there is severe erosion, and based on estimates, the farm needs 120 to 150 loads of dirt and gravel just to get it where it needs to be.

Ward said almost no improvements have been made on the farm since the early 1980s, so all the water tanks and the concrete around those tanks need to be repaired.

"Adam (Frisch)'s doing a great job at trying to maintain this facility," Ward said, "but obviously with limited resources, we can only do so much."

She said they are also about to

lose a fence on the pasture due to erosion, so the cost of repairs is going to "far exceed" just the dirt and gravel.

Ward said fixing these problems and others is part of phase 1 of the plan, which is to fix what is wrong with structures and facilities on the farm.

Phase 2, she said, would include building a new indoor arena that can house tech classes, equestrian and rodeo practices, livestock judging and horse shows. Ward said a horse association has said it would bring its National Youth Show to Colby if the school had a better facility.

Ward also mentioned the possibility of bringing in money through renting the arena.

"We can rent these facilities out," she said. "There's a demand. The horse market is growing here, and the need and want to do events in the area is growing, and there's nowhere (to do it), so there's a really good opportunity for some revenue."

Ward said they are looking at building a 150-by-200-foot indoor arena with a classroom/meeting room attached, along with a concession kitchen, restrooms and wash racks for showing animals. She also said they would like to have bleachers for viewing.

"We still want to keep that relationship with Thomas County for rodeo," Ward said, "but this would be more for just recreational or small events."

She said they want to build a small stall barn for rodeo kids to keep their horses in, which she estimates would cost the college

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## Time to talk after speech



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Cheryl Brown Henderson (middle) and her mother, Leola Brown Montgomery, talked with Delma (Yhrich) Dible about Zelma Hurst's childhood days. Hurst and Montgomery were among 13 plaintiffs in the landmark Brown v. Board of Edu-

cation decision which outlawed school segregation. Hurst, a 1938 graduate of Oakley High School, died in 2008 at age 88. Henderson spoke at the Oakley High auditorium, explaining why Zelma was so important in desegregation of schools.

## Drought drives birds to odd places

MAD ISLAND, Texas - Strange things are afoot in the bird world.

Endangered whooping cranes flew 2,500 miles from Canada to Texas, where they usually spend the winter. Instead, they pecked around for a short time and flew back. In Nebraska, other cranes never left.

Some ducks just kept flying south - all the way to Belize in Central America. And a snowy

owl was spotted near Dallas, only the sixth time that's ever happened.

Throughout the winter, scientists have noticed these and other examples of bizarre bird migrations - a result, they believe, of flocks becoming desperate for food and habitat becoming increasingly scarce because of the stubborn drought in Texas. The unusually mild winter in the Northeast

and Midwest has even persuaded some birds they could stay put, fly shorter distances or turn back north earlier than normal.

"We have birds scattered all over the place looking for habitat right now," said Richard Kostecke, a bird expert and associate director of conservation, research and planning at the Nature Conservancy in Texas.

The concerns go beyond a few

lost flocks. Birds often use the winter months to rest, eat and gain energy for the long journey back to their nesting grounds, so biologists can only guess at the effects of these peculiar movements.

What will happen if the birds' diets are altered or if they expend too much energy? What if they fail to migrate at all? Will they still be able to breed after a stressful winter?

## Foundation asks lawyer to speak on estate issues

By Christina Beringer

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Hoping to educate board members and the public on planned giving, the Thomas County Community Foundation and K-State Research and Extension have asked a Salina lawyer to talk here on estate planning and other issues affecting seniors.

Kenneth Wasserman will appear from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, March 15, at the 4-H Building, on the Thomas County fairgrounds off of Olive Street west or Range Ave.

Topics will include estate planning, long-term care insurance, estate-tax laws and potential changes, said foundation director Me-

linda Olson. Cost to attend is \$10 to pay for supper. People are asked to register to attend no later than next Friday by calling the extension office at (785) 460-4582 or e-mailing jengels@ksu.edu.

Olson said she and administrative assistant Shelly Myers attended a special meeting sponsored by the Western Kansas Alliance of Community Foundations on Feb. 23 in Scott City.

Two main goals were developed at that meeting, she said: each foundation will provide training for its board members, and the alliance will focus its efforts on educating the public.

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SANDRA WICK/Smith County Extension

After hearing Kenneth Wasserman in January, Melinda Olson, executive director of the Thomas County Community Foundation, invited him to speak here on estate planning.

## New report minimizes danger of K-State lab

TOPEKA (AP) - Changes in the design for a proposed federal animal disease research lab in Manhattan sharply reduced the risk of an accidental release of deadly diseases, according to a new assessment released today.

The Department of Homeland Security assessment updates a report issued in 2010. The new document puts the risk of an accidental release, including in the event of an earthquake or tornado, at one-tenth of 1 percent, down from the previous calculation of 70 percent.

"While the earlier design far exceeded tornado shelter standards,

moving up to nuclear regulatory standards for structural integrity should provide an increased comfort level," said Ron Trewyn, Kansas State University's vice president for research.

Homeland Security plans to build the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility near the K-State campus.

The department selected the Kansas site for a \$650 million new facility to replace an aging lab at Plum Island, N.Y. The lab is to be completed by 2018.

