



Division of Vehicles gets new system

Director of Vehicles Donna Shelite thanks Kansans and county treasurers for their cooperation and patience as the state completes its transition to a new system that handles titling and registration of vehicles.

Last week, more than 6.8 million records were converted to the new system while state and county offices closed out of the three-decades-old mainframe system, installed new computer equipment and prepared to serve customers again.

In 2008, the legislature authorized a significant technology upgrade for the state to bring the Division of Vehicles into the 21st century.

The purpose of this multi-year modernization effort was to replace three aging mainframe systems used for motor vehicle titling and registration, driver licensing and inventory management with a single, modern system that is easier to use, maintain and enhance.

This week, state and county offices are again open for business and performing vehicle title work and renewing vehicle registrations in the modernized system.

County Treasurer Donita Applebury said Colby's office is still having a lot of issues, but the state's working on resolving them.

"We have a conference call daily at

9:30 a.m. with all 105 counties and the state," she said, "and they update us on the problems that they're seeing and what they're doing to fix them."

Applebury said that when the system went live on Monday, they were able to do some things and it went well, but Tuesday the system wouldn't let them issue tags.

"But the state worked on it all day and night to fix it," she said.

She said there tend to be little issues and glitches every day, but the counties let the state know and the state tells them how to fix the issue or how to work around it.

She also said counties are helping one

another to solve problems if the state can't help them at that time.

"What I can't stress enough is please be patient," Applebury said. "It's an entirely new system and it takes us longer to get through it. We're still learning it, too."

She said she wants the public to understand that there might be a glitch while they are at the office and if she can't get through to the state, she may ask them to come back.

"Once we've got the glitches worked out, I think it will be a really good thing," Applebury said. "It's gonna work, it's gonna get better. It's just gonna take us a little time to get through."

"I just ask for your patience and understanding."

Applebury said that when you come in, make sure you have your driver's license and proof of insurance to get new tags because the new system ties a person back to their driver's license number.

The public should also be aware of two additional options for renewing vehicles: Webtags (www.kswebtags.org) and renewal by mail through county treasurers' offices. Both options offer great convenience and save customers time spent standing in line.

Colby museum receives grants from council

By Kayla Cornett
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The Kansas Humanities Council recently awarded grants to 15 Kansas cultural organizations, and the Thomas County Historical Society was one of the organizations, receiving \$2,000 from the council.

The council gives these grants for the communities to research and document community stories of work and working as part of the council's "The Way We Worked in Kansas" initiative.

The Thomas County Historical Society's project is called "Agriculture: Work on the High Plains in Kansas," which is an exhibition that will look at agriculture and agribusiness that supported farming on the high plains. Sue Taylor of the Prairie Museum of Art and History is the project director.

In September 2012, "The Way

We Worked," a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition exploring the story of the American worker, will kickoff a statewide tour in Lyons and will continue on to stops in Hugoton, Goodland, Concordia, Baldwin City, and Franklin through June 2013.

Taylor said their project will be on display in Goodland along with the traveling exhibition and then it will be previewed in the Prairie Museum for about a month before it's added to the Cooper Barn for good.

The Kansas Humanities Council sponsors "The Way We Worked" in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street program.

"The Way We Worked in Kansas" projects are part of the Kansas Humanities Council's statewide initiative about work taking place in 2012 and 2013.

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Colby Grade School students Rylee Unruh (center) washed clothes and Logan Britton (left) waited in line to churn butter Friday at the Prairie Fair at the Prairie Museum of Art and History.

The kids learned what it would be like to live in the prairie days by doing these tasks along with gathering meat and eggs, riding horses to church and collecting "buffalo chips."

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Obama backs gay marriage on tour

By Jim Kuhnhehn
Associated Press

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama said Vice President Joe Biden got "a little bit over his skis" in publicly embracing gay marriage, forcing Obama to speed up his own plans to announce his historic support for the right of same-sex couples to marry.

"Would I have preferred to have done this in my own way, in my own terms, without I think, there being a lot of notice to everybody? Sure," Obama said. "But all's well that ends well."

Obama, who was ready Thursday to dive into the embrace of

Hollywood's wealthy elite at a gala fund-raising event, said he had planned to announce his support for gay marriage before his party's convention in early September. But he told ABC News that his hand was forced by Biden, though he said his vice president spoke out in support of same-sex marriage out of a "generosity of spirit."

The timing of the event is creating a blockbuster confluence of high celebrity, big money and committed activism. Hollywood is home to some of the most high-profile backers of gay marriage and the 150 donors who are paying \$40,000 to attend Clooney's

dinner Thursday night will no doubt feel newly invigorated by Obama's watershed announcement the day before.

Overall, the dinner is expected to raise close to \$15 million - about \$6 million from the guests and the rest from a campaign contest for small-dollar donors, the winners of which get to participate in the dinner. It is an unprecedented amount for a single event. And it means that in one single evening the Obama camp and the Democratic Party will collect more than Mitt Romney, the presumed Republican challenger, has amassed in his best single month of fund-raising.

Obama will also hold fundraisers earlier in the day in Seattle, where he was expected to collect at least \$3 million toward his reelection effort. On Friday, he will fly to Nevada, a highly contested state, where he will call for housing relief in a speech in Reno.

But Obama's support of gay marriage, announced in an ABC interview Wednesday, will be dominant, culminating in yet another fundraiser Monday in New York sponsored by gay and Latino Obama supporters.

"I have hesitated on gay marriage in part because I thought

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Kansas lawmakers pass tax reductions

By John Hanna
Associated Press

TOPEKA - Massive tax reductions cleared the Kansas Legislature on Wednesday, but even as Gov. Sam Brownback and his conservative Republican allies marked a political victory, they scrambled to start containing possible future budget problems.

The House narrowly approved a bill to cut income and sales taxes by an estimated \$233 million in the fiscal year that be-

gins July 1, with the annual tax relief growing to \$911 million after four years. Although the vote ended acrimonious debates in both legislative chambers, it came on a political maneuver by conservatives.

The Senate had approved the same plan in March but only to keep debate moving. Its moderate GOP leaders and Democrats didn't like large parts of the plan and worried about its potential

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MEGAN CARMICHAEL/Safe Routes to School

Students from Colby Public Schools posed for a picture Wednesday after they rode their bikes to school for National Bike to School Day. It was the first year for this event and over 90 Colby

students participated. The first 30 students to arrive at school received free bike helmets, donated by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Bike to School Day big success in Colby

On Wednesday, communities across the country, including Colby, joined together to celebrate the first National Bike to School Day.

Schools, cities, bicycle groups, public health organizations and parents alike organized bike rides and bike trains to school to highlight and celebrate the benefits of choosing student-powered transportation to school.

To date, more than 700 Bike to School Day events have registered on the official website, www.walkbiketoschool.org. And the total number of participating schools is expected to grow throughout May, which is National Bike Month.

The website gives users the tools to learn about the event, to plan and get ready for an event and encourages them to continue walking and biking year-round.

The website also lets participants upload photos from their

event and has a list of the schools that are participating in each state.

Bike to School Day encourages a bike-focused celebration in the month of May and builds on the popularity and success of International Walk to School Day, which is celebrated across the country - and the world - each October.

Colby Public Schools joined in on the national event and had over 90 students and parents ride their bikes to school. The first 30 students to arrive were greeted by Megan Carmichael, the Safe Routes to School coordinator, and received free bike helmets which were donated by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

