



Businesses will close for holiday

Many Colby businesses and government offices will change their hours Monday for New Year's Eve and even more will shut down Tuesday for New Year's Day.

City and county offices will be closed Tuesday and the county treasurer's office will be closed to the public on Monday while employees tie up the year's book-keeping. The Senior Progress Center will be closed Tuesday and the transportation van will not run.

State offices, such as the Veterans Affairs office, will be closed Tuesday. The K-State Experiment Station has been closed since Christmas Eve and won't reopen until Thursday, while the state Department of Revenue driver's license office will be closed both Monday and Tuesday.

Post offices will have regular hours Monday but will close Tuesday. Federal offices, including the U.S. Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Agency, will be closed Tuesday along with the Thomas County Conservation District.

All banks, including the Farmers and Merchants Bank branch at Dillons, will be closed as well. And The Bank will close at 2 p.m. Monday.

The *Colby Free Press* office will be open on New Year's Eve from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and there will be a paper that day. The office will be closed New Year's Day.

Pioneer Memorial Library will be closed on Tuesday and will resume regular hours on Wednesday.

The Oasis and Pilot truck stops, along with most convenience stores, will be open on the holiday. Petro Lube will be open regular hours this weekend.

The garage at Tubbs and Sons will be closed Tuesday and might close early Monday, while Colby Dodge will be closed Tuesday. P&D Auto will be closed Tuesday as well.

Colby Bowl will be open both days while Colby Cinema will be open on New Year's Eve, but

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Colby author finishes book

By Sam Dieter

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An author from Colby just finished his first book, about a preacher obsessed with quantum physics, based in part on his experiences here.

"Growing up in that country out there has influenced everything I do," said David Piper, who now lives in Austin, Texas.

Piper said he moved to Colby when he was 8. While living here, he said, he learned about both telephones and fiction writing. He recently finished his first novel, "Church of the God Particle," based partly in Colby from the 1960s to the 1980s.

One of the main characters grows up in Colby, attending a fictional Catholic church which houses an orphanage and has a different name.

Along with his life in Colby, Piper said, his career in telecom-

munications helped inspire his book.

After graduating high school in 1972, he went to Colby Community College for several years. During that time, he worked for Bell Brothers burying telephone cable. He went to the University of Kansas in 1974, but dropped out. Then he was a repairman for Southwestern Bell in Lawrence for 11 years.

"Going in and out of people's places, I met some really odd people," he said.

He went back to school in Lawrence in 1989 and finished a telecommunications degree in 1991 at the Northwest Kansas Technical School in Goodland. Then he worked for telecommunications companies in Memphis and Columbus, Ohio, before ending up in Austin, working for a company called Grande Communications. He helps program computers to

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Woman here helps with employment

By Christina Beringer

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A Colby woman is helping people in Thomas and Sherman counties find jobs, learn skills and prepare for interviews - and helping businesses find qualified workers.

Bronwyn Bitner, who has lived in Colby for 14 years, took the position with the Local Area 1 Workforce Investment Board, known as Kansas WorkforceONE, on Nov. 1, and has offices in Colby and Goodland. She replaces Patti Purvis, who retired in September.

Thomas County people can see her from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5

p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays in the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave. She's in Goodland on Mondays and Thursdays at 720 Armory Rd. Her phone number is (785) 443-4607.

Kansas WorkforceONE, based in Salina, is an affiliate of KansasWORKS, the state job service, which is part of the Department of Commerce. It covers 62 counties, including all of western Kansas. KansasWORKS closed a state-staffed job office in Colby which had served this area until April 2012.

"We provide workforce investment activities that increase employment, retention and earnings of participants," Bitner said, "and our efforts are part of the Work-



B. Bitner

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Living nativity scene set up for Christmas

Mary Schroeder played the Virgin Mary and her husband Richard played Joseph at a living nativity scene (above) on K-25 about seven miles north of Colby. Their friends (from left) Kade Carter, Reagan Coulter and Kayla Ziegelmeier played the wise men. Employees of State Farm Insurance, including Lacy O'Neal, who dressed as an angel (left), helped put on the nativity scene all last week. State Farm Agent Jane Johnson, who dressed as a stable boy (below), organized the scene at her house as a memorial to her late husband Theron and a benefit for Genesis-Thomas County food bank.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



New faces lead Kansas education panels

By John Milburn

The Associated Press

TOPEKA - Veteran conservative Kansas legislators with diverse backgrounds will be at the center of education debates during the 2013 legislative session, one that is expected to see discussion on policy issues long relegated to the back burner.

Sen. Steve Abrams and Rep. Kasha Kelley, both Arkansas City Republicans, were tapped earlier this month to lead their chamber's education committees. Abrams brings nearly 20 years of elected education leadership, includ-

ing a stint on the state Board of Education. Kelley has experience serving as vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee.

Kelley said she would be visiting with committee members and others to determine the agenda. Her vice chair is Rep. Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, who also will chair the Education Budget Committee. Cassidy is a former principal with a deep interest in education.

Like Abrams, Kelley said more focus needs to be placed on changes to the system that help students tap their interests and keep them engaged in learning.

"I know that there are some deep divides in how we deal with education. I always believe that if the common goal is excellence that surely we can find common ground to get there," Kelley said.

Kelley said she would like legislators to spend time defining what a suitable education means in Kansas, in particular as it relates to the school finance formula. She would like to see the model of education focus less on driving students toward a four-year college degree, though they must be prepared for that path, and more on career and technical training.

