

Open again with a new look



HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press

Owner Michelle Phemon adjusted a display of scarves at Plum Creek Ltd. in Colby. The store reopened March 18 with a new look after closing for renovations. Phemon said the store now

has separate areas for men's and women's wear, along with increased space for children's wear.

Emergency plans take coordination

By Monique Cheatum
Thomas County Health Department

The term "emergency preparedness" is just what it sounds like: being prepared in the event of an emergency.

Emergencies come in all shapes and sizes, of course. It could be a minor inconvenience, such as a planned power outage that lasts two hours, or it could be a catastrophic tornado that wipes out most of our county. Either way, we as private citizens, businesses and a community, need to be prepared.

Various entities within Thomas County are responsible to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, infectious disease, terrorism and mass casualty emergencies. Public health plays an important role by educating the public, training staff and volunteers and assisting other organizations with planning.

While it is important for each business and government department to have their own individualized plan, it is also essential for us to work together for the improvement of our community. The Local Emergency Planning Committee meets quarterly for updates within the community and training so that each partner knows their role within each specific Emergency Support Function.

Information on the Thomas County Emergency Planning Committee can be found at www.thomascountyks.com under Emergency Management, found in the department's tab.

Emergency support functions are mechanisms for grouping functions most frequently used to

provide federal support to states and federal-to-federal support, both for declared disasters and emergencies. These are a good guideline for organizing local aid and are essential for state and federal reimbursement.

Training, planning and practicing are a big part of emergency preparedness. Just like the kids at school practicing a fire drill, we as community members need to practice preparedness. The Thomas County Health Department practices mass dispensing-vaccination every year at the fair building.

If there were ever a pandemic event, in which the entire county would need to be vaccinated or given preventative antibiotics, the Health Department would be in charge of organizing and distributing the medication in an orderly fashion. This is why we practice every year giving flu shots!

This is a great opportunity for the Health Department to prepare and an even greater opportunity for the community to become accustomed to the routine of going to the fair building for services.

The Health Department also participates in exercises and training at the local, regional and state level that coordinate resources and efforts.

Monique Cheatum graduated as a registered nurse from Garden City Community College in 2008 and has been active in public health and emergency preparedness for over four years. Earlier, she attended Trinidad State Junior College in Alamosa, Colo., where she became a licensed practical nurse, practicing in a rural hospital for five years.

Study shows health law will raise claim costs

By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A new study finds that insurance companies will have to pay out an average of 32 percent more for medical claims on individual health policies under President Barack Obama's health care overhaul.

What does that mean for you? It could increase premiums for at least some Americans.

If you are uninsured, or you buy your policy directly from an insurance company, you should pay attention.

But if you have an employer plan, like most workers and their families, odds are you don't have much to worry about.

The estimates from the Society of Actuaries could turn into a political headache for the Obama administration at a time when much of the country remains skeptical of the Affordable Care Act.

The administration is questioning the study, saying it doesn't give a full picture — and costs will go down.

Actuaries are financial risk professionals who conduct long-range cost estimates for pension plans, insurance companies and government programs.

The study says claims costs will go up largely because sicker people will join the insurance pool. That's because the law forbids insurers from turning down those with pre-existing medical problems, effective Jan. 1. Everyone gets sick sooner or later, but sicker people also use more health care services.

"Claims cost is the most impor-

tant driver of health care premiums," said Kristi Bohn, an actuary who worked on the study. Spending on sicker people and other high-cost groups will overwhelm an influx of younger, healthier people into the program, said the report.

The Obama administration challenged the design of the study, saying it focused only on one piece of the puzzle and ignored cost relief strategies in the law, such as tax credits to help people afford premiums and special payments to insurers who attract an outside share of the sick. The study also doesn't take into account the potential price-cutting effect of competition in new state insurance markets that will go live Oct. 1, administration officials said.

At a White House briefing Tuesday, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said some of what passes for health insurance today is so skimpy it can't be compared to the comprehensive coverage available under the law. "Some of these folks have very high catastrophic plans that don't pay for anything unless you get hit by a bus," she said. "They're really mortgage protection, not health insurance."

Sebelius said the picture on premiums won't start coming into focus until insurers submit their bids. Those results may not be publicly known until late summer.

Another striking finding of the report was a wide disparity in cost impact among the states.

Solomon Valley 4-H Club

The Solomon Valley "Parents Night" January 4-H meeting was Jan. 14.

The meeting began with Rich Calliham leading the Pledge of Allegiance and Todd Stramel with the 4-H pledge.

The roll call question was "Describe yourself using a weather term." There were nine members and eight parents present.

Lisa Stramel read a poem about

4-H members and 4-H projects. Jenny Niblock gave a project talk on "Picking grand champion cookies."

Todd Stramel led the group in recreation by playing the human knot game.

Refreshments were provided by the Woolfer family.

— Rich Calliham acting reporter

Insurance Department has scholarships available

The Kansas Insurance Department is seeking applicants for five \$1,000 scholarships to be awarded to African-American students enrolled in Kansas universities, colleges or community colleges during the 2013 fall semester.

The African-American Monumental Life Settlement Scholarships are part of a nationwide legal settlement regarding premiums charged by Monumental Life Insurance Company to African-Americans. The Kansas Legislature passed a law designating that the state's share of the settlement money go to a scholarship program for Kansas African-American college students.

The deadline for fall semester 2013 applications is Wednesday, May 1. A scholarship committee of community volunteers and department staff members will award the scholarships, which are renewable.

An applicant for the scholarship must meet these requirements:

- The applicant must be an African-American student.
- The applicant must be enrolled

as a student at a Kansas accredited institution of higher learning during the 2013-2014 school year.

- The applicant must indicate on the application that his or her designated major is in mathematics, computer science, business, accounting, economics, finance or investments.

- The applicant must have a cumulative college grade average of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale.

- The applicant must supply an academic reference letter from a teacher or administrator at his or her higher learning institute, as well as a one-page essay describing career goals.

- The applicant must be available to be interviewed.

Eligible students can contact the office of minority affairs or student financial aid at their colleges or universities for information, or download the information and application online at the Kansas Insurance Department's website, www.ksinsurance.org/gpa/scholarship.htm, or on the department's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/kansasinsurancedepartment.

Corrections

The Colby Free Press wants to maintain an accurate record of our town. Please report any error or lack of clarity in a news story to us at 462-3963.

Bridge Club

Meadow Lake bridge winners for March 19 were: first, Ken Ptacek; second, Larry Barrett; third, Billie Keck; fourth, Katie Melvin; fifth, Dave Ulmer.

Winners Tuesday were: first, Ken Ptacek; second, Elaine Ptacek; third, Billie Keck; fourth, Sarah Jane Barrett; and fifth, Gail Vacca.

Brewster releases third-quarter honor roll

The Brewster School District has released the honor roll for the third nine-week grading period. Students on the Superintendent's Honor Roll have earned a 4.0 grade average. Those on the Principal's Honor Roll have averages of 3.5 to 3.99. Those on the Honor Roll have 3.0 to 3.49 averages.

High School Superintendent's Honor Roll
Seniors: Will Allen, Amber Barrie.

Principal's Honor Roll
Seniors: Dan Brown, Daymond Hanley, Michael Schmidt.
Juniors: Ashley Barrie.

Sophomores: Dara Roulrier, Layton Worth.
Freshman: Taylyr Cheatum, Rachel Friess.

Honor Roll
Seniors: Ben Baird, Shane Rice.
Juniors: Nathan Jorgensen.
Sophomores: Alicia Barrie.
Freshman: T-Aera Abbott, Justin Schmidt.

Junior High Superintendent's Honor Roll
Eighth grade: Jaden Schmidt.

Principal's Honor Roll
Eighth grade: Kylee Cheatum, Tad Holm.

Sixth grade: Karlee Brown, Mackedzie Clymer, Brett Roulrier.

Honor Roll
Eighth grade: Dalton Arntt, J.B. Felzien, Erica Hernandez.

Seventh grade: Jacob Benham, Adrian Mercado.
Sixth grade: Mikenna Hanevik.

Man's car ends up on roof

GLENDALE, Calif. (AP) — A Southern California man's car ended up on his neighbor's roof in an unusual accident over the weekend.

Glendale police Sgt. Sean Riley tells City News Service that the driver lost control Saturday af-

ternoon on a driveway in an area where homes are arrayed on a steep hillside.

The vehicle ended up on the roof of the next house down the hill.

Riley says the driver reported he had a mechanical failure.

Ralph Wolf is Retiring



After 34 years of service to Kansas State University at the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Ralph Wolf is retiring.

Please stop by and wish him well at a reception honoring him on Saturday, March 30th from 2:00 to 4:00 PM at the Prairie Museum of Art & History, 1905 S. Franklin Ave, in Colby.

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HOLY WEEK

Trinity Lutheran Church
5th St & Country Club Dr., Colby KS
www.trinitycolby.com

Maudy Thursday
March 28 - 7 p.m.

Good Friday
March 29 - 7 p.m.

NO Saturday Worship

Easter Sunrise Service
March 31 - 7 a.m.
(Breakfast Served following Sunrise Service)

Easter Sunday Worship
10:30 a.m.