



Shelters to be shown on new map

By Sam Dieter
Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkansas.com

Thomas County's emergency management department is working on a map of tornado shelters in the county.

"I got started on it because they had a lot of talk about it after (the recent tornado in) Moore, Okla.," said Emergency Management Director Autumn Arasmith, "so I said, 'I'll start it and see what happens.'"

The Oklahoma city made maps of its shelters after it was hit in the 1990s, Arasmith said. She heard talk from other emergency managers about how much it helped when the storm hit this year.

Arasmith said she started working on the map the week of the Thomas County Fair. She sent information to the Colby Free Press and had a booth at the fair, getting people to add their storm cellars to

the map. "I have no idea how many people have basements, storm cellars, root cellars," she said, adding that if emergency responders knew where the cellars are, "they would know right where to go, where to look for them, they would have a good idea how many they were looking for."

To register a basement or shelter, you can call, go by the emergency management office to fill out a form or go to the Thomas County Emergency Management web page at www.thomascountyks.com/Departments/EmergencyManagement/StormShelterRegistrationForm/tabid/12819/Default.aspx.

The office is only looking for residential shelters, Arasmith said. She and her assistant will keep the map until it's needed, she said, adding that she expects it to be an ongoing project.

Enrollment down again

By Heather Alwin
Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkansas.com

The Colby Community College trustees heard last week that the school's registration is down again this year, perhaps by as much as 9 percent, though final numbers will not be available until later this month.

The board also approved faculty, generator and roofing contracts at its meeting Aug. 19.

The total number of students enrolled as of that afternoon was 954, said Dr. George McNulty, vice president of student affairs.

President Stephen Vacik said new recruiting efforts should bring in more students over the next few years, but it takes time to see results from a change in focus.

The board approved 134 contracts for faculty and staff members for the upcoming school year. The school couldn't give an accurate dollar amount for these contracts, however, since many are based on the number of students enrolled in each course.

The college had extended an employment offer to a farm and ranch management instructor who declined the offer. Greg Nichols, vice president of academic affairs, said the college is prepared to cover the courses with other instructors until they can find a full-time replacement, but he already has a candidate in mind.

In other business, the trustees • Passed the \$12,463,000 2013-14 budget as published. The board held a budget hearing on Aug. 12, but no one showed up to comment. The budget is down \$1,417,000 from last year's budget.

• Discussed hiring a new lawyer. The trustees agreed they had no problems with the accuracy of advice given by John Gatz, their former attorney, but objected to his recently increased rates.

The trustees considered asking other area lawyers to advise the board or hiring an expert from outside the area. Chairman Arlen Leiker said he would research the topic further for the next meeting.

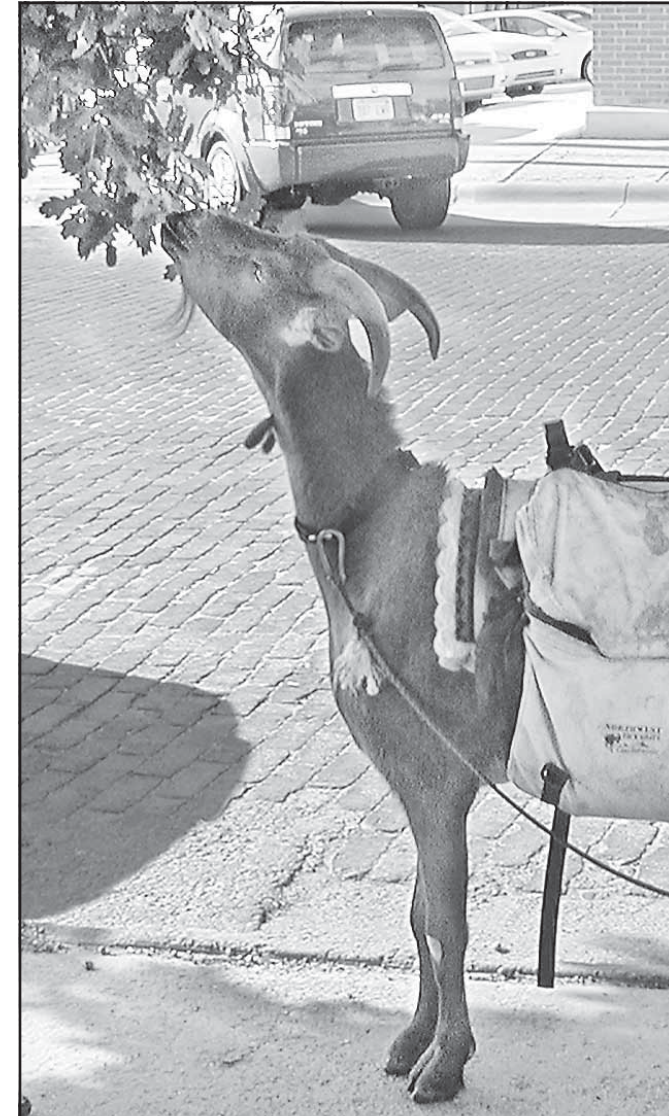
• Heard a report from Roger Ostmeier, a Honeywell representative, that the school's wind turbine and solar voltaic systems are "way outperforming" estimates.

Ostmeier suggested the school further maximize its energy conservation by scheduling classes in blocks to avoid cycles of frequent heating or cooling for classrooms scattered around campus.

"You can't save any more money than off," he said several times.

Ostmeier cited the college's pool as one area of possible savings. The school is paying for therapeutic temperature conditions at the pool, he said, which is expensive on a "big box" building. He suggested cutting therapeutic

See "DOWN," Page 2



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press
Steven Wescott and his goat Leeroy walked into town along U.S. 24 Wednesday morning and made a breakfast stop outside Love's Country Store (above). Steve and Leeroy then headed to the post office (top), when Leeroy stopped in front of the Colby Free Press office (right) to meet employees and chow down on acorns.

Hiking goat brings friend

By Sam Dieter
Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkansas.com

A Seattle man passed through town Wednesday morning on his way across the country, with his pack goat.

Steve Wescott plans to spend a couple of days here, then go to mile marker 52 on U.S. 24, where he started this morning, and head east along the route of Interstate 70. He has been walking after dark; 10 miles at night and 10 in the morning.

On his way to the post office, he stopped at Love's Country Store and hitched his goat Leeroy Brown to a concrete post outside while he went to get breakfast. Coming out with a breakfast croissant and a Frappuccino for himself – and some bottled water and Powerade for Leeroy – Wescott told his story.

"I got him off the Internet, and I've never owned a goat before," he said.

The purpose of his walk is to raise money for Uzima Outreach in Intervention, a rehabilitation center and orphanage that his

friend Steve Turner helps run in a drug-and-crime-ridden slum in Kenya.

"It's hard," Wescott said, "I mean, it's a third-world country."

The center was started about four years ago and the orphanage was added two years ago. It has seven volunteer staff members and serves 30 kids and 15 adults. It has to provide funding for itself because it is not part of any larger organization. So Wescott decided get the goat.

See "GOAT," Page 2

Drought watch list shortened; county still at risk

By Sam Dieter
Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkansas.com

Thomas County continues to suffer from drought conditions, even as rain has helped other parts of the state.

The Kansas Water Office updated its list of counties facing drought measures Monday, and Thomas County – along with all those around it – has been placed on a drought emergency status. The updated list marked the first time since the middle of last summer that the status has improved for some counties.

"Honestly conditions hadn't changed until we got a lot of these rains, you know, a couple weeks ago," Katie Patterson-Ingels with the Water Office said.

She added that the drought was bad enough over the last year that this is the first time the list has been changed since last summer. In all, 20 counties have gone from an emergency to a "drought warning" status, 25 have been moved down to a drought watch, and 20 are no longer under any kind of drought designation, many in southern and central Kansas.

But 37 counties in the western part of the state remain under an emergency designation, Patterson-Ingels said. The drought is about four years old here.

"You guys are right in the middle of the worst of it," she said.

Although emergency conditions allow the governor to declare a burn ban, there has not been one here since it was lifted. Last year's ban moved the traditional Kiwanis Club Fourth of July fireworks show to October.

Emergency designations cover the counties of: Cheyenne, Clark, Decatur, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Gove, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Lane, Logan, Meade, Morton, Ness, Norton, Osborne, Phillips, Rawlins, Rooks, Russell, Scott, Seward, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Stanton, Stevens, Thomas, Trego, Wallace and Wichita.

Counties placed on a drought warning include:

Atchison, Barber, Comanche, Doniphan, Douglas, Edwards, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Jewel, Johnson, Kiowa, Leavenworth, Miami, Osage, Pawnee, Pratt, Rush, Shawnee and Wyandotte.

Counties on a drought watch include: Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Brown, Chase, Clay, Cloud, Coffey, Geary, Harper, Kingman, Lyon, Linn, Marshall, Mitchell, Morris, Nemaha, Neosho, Pottawatomie, Republic, Riley, Sumner, Wabaunsee, Washington and Woodson.

