

## Celebrating Nursing Home Week



Residents at Sherman County Good Samaritan Society helped celebrate National Nursing Home Week on Monday with a balloon release in the morning. Photos by Josh Harenberg The Goodland Star-News



## Colby post office changes would affect postal collection times in Goodland

MAIL, from Page 1

a little more than 43 hours per week, a little more than one full-time position.

Asked if any clerks here would be reassigned to Salina, Pivovar said he would have to follow collective bargaining agreements in the contracts with the American Postal Workers Union, which represents mail clerks. A new contract is being voted on now, he said, so he's not sure what the rules will be. Employees can request transfers, however, and Pivovar said has a limited ability to transfer excess work between facilities.

The Postal Service is in what Pivovar called an "acute financial crisis." Electronic communication, the recession and changes in the makeup of the mail have resulted in a 42 percent decline in first class mail since 2001. The service lost about \$8.5 million last year, and Pivovar estimated it would have to spend an extra \$500 million this year on gas alone, as it has one of the largest transportation fleets in the country.

The demand and volume of mail has been reduced, he said, but the Postal Service still has the manpower and equipment to process the larger volume, and so it has to make reductions.

He said in addition to the Hays and Colby centers, consolidation proposals are in the works for the mail processing centers in Lincoln, Neb., Hutchinson and Independence.

"It's the same thing that's happening across the country," he said.

Pivovar said the Postal Service already consolidates Saturday mail sorting from Goodland, Colby and most of western Kansas to Wichita, and has done so for some time.

"We're already doing a lot of that," he said. "It's making us more efficient."

Pivovar emphasized several times the Postal Service is not closing the Colby post office, but rather moving part of the mail processing work. However, the service has been closing smaller post offices around the country.

He said he has been reviewing post offices with nine carrier routes or less that have another office within 10 miles to see if the carrier routes can be combined. He said he just finished 23 public meetings in towns where the service plans to close offices that have had vacant postmaster positions.

"What I've been telling my employees is everything potentially is on the table for review," he said.

James Foster, rural development representative with the Kansas Department of Commerce, asked if the Salina processing facility will need to be upgraded to handle mail from Colby and Hays. Pivovar said part of the reason the service chose Salina is because it already has enough capacity. The service will add more man-hours in Salina to process the mail.

Foster asked how many of these studies are not implemented. Pivovar said several consolidation proposals, such as some for Saturday deliveries, have not been approved, while others take years before they are implemented.

Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the change will require her employees to have their work done earlier so their outgoing mail can make it to the post office on time.

Steve Haynes, president of Nor'West Newspapers, owner of the *The Goodland Star-News* and *Colby Free Press*, said the changed time will affect the printing and

mailing schedules at small businesses, especially newspapers. He asked if the service had studied the economic impact of the plan, and Pivovar said he had not.

Pivovar, while defending the change, said he recognizes that for anyone whose service will be downgraded, the change will be important.

"To that one customer, that's 100 percent of their mail, we do recognize that," he said. "That's something we are weighing."

Pivovar said his office has done its initial review of the proposal. The Office of the Inspector General has done an audit, he said, and found the overall scheme to be financially sound. Notes from the community meetings, as well as any concerns or suggestions sent in by mail, would go into the official records submitted to the regional office in Denver and then to the national office, he said.

If the plan is approved, the public will be notified and the service then has 60 days to make the change.

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## Budget holds up finish of session

With only days left in this session the budget is still being worked. There are still over one hundred differences on line items in this budget. Wednesday, May 11th, is the last scheduled day for this session; however, without a budget legislators will be working extra days until a budget is completed.

It is imperative the State make payments to our schools on a timely basis. To do this we need a sufficient ending balance. The last few years these payments have not been made on time forcing our superintendents and school boards to be creative in paying the teachers salaries and other expenses.

I would like to thank our superintendents for all their hard work in these challenging times. With all of the cuts and late payments from the state you folks have done a wonderful job. Thank you to our school boards, present and past, our schools are the heart of our communities. A thank you to all of our teachers and their staffs for the hard work, dedication and long hours spent in educating our students.

Funding Flexibility for Schools (H Sub for SB 111)

As budgets remain strained, some of the most direct focus on funding has been drawn to schools. Schools constitute the bulk of our budget in Kansas. Accordingly, as we work to reduce spending it's difficult to ignore school budgets as part of the debate. One consistent focus in this area involves "unencumbered funds" which some contend could be used to help close budget gaps. The House passed an important piece of legislation this week that identifies unencumbered funds and allows local districts to use them for more critical purposes if revenues decline.

SB 111 changes the starting date of the special education school finance formula that determines the minimum and maximum amount of special education state aid a school may receive until June 30, 2014. The bill allows school districts to expend a portion of their unencumbered balances in particular funds for use with: at-risk education; bilingual education; contingency reserves; driver training; parent education;



**rick  
billinger**  
state rep.

preschool at-risk; professional development; summer school, virtual schools and vocational education. School boards are not limited to using the funds on the priority list and are not required to use the total unencumbered balance before using the unencumbered balance in other funds.

Implementation of the bill establishes the aggregate amount that can be expended from the unencumbered balances for the 2011-2012 school years and requires that 65 percent of the authorized aggregate amount be used for instruction. In addition, the bill allows school districts to levy a capital outlay tax for the 2011-2012 school year for paying utility services and insurance. School districts that have current levies at the maximum amount permitted would be ineligible to take advantage of this provision.

This bill gives school districts the opportunity to access some of the approximate \$358 million in unencumbered funds in over 90 percent of the state's school districts. These are funds districts have received from the state, which have been accumulating in a variety of school district accounts due to use restrictions. To offset the loss of base state aid per pupil funding, the bill allows districts to use their reserves to help make ends meet. For more than 90 percent of the State's school districts, funds would be sufficient to restore the the base state aid to \$4,012 from \$3,762 for the 2011-2012 school years. Furthermore, the bill requires at least 65 percent of the surplus funds to be used on instruction thus protecting teachers and classrooms from budget cuts.

Kansas Offender Registration Act (H Sub for SB 37)

SB 37 makes several changes to the Kansas Offender Registration Act to bring Kansas into compliance with the federal Adam Walsh Act. The bill limits the definition of offender to sex offenders, violent offenders and drug offenders. Severity

levels for first, second and third or subsequent offenders of the Act are all increased in the bill and failure to comply with the Act for a period longer than 180 consecutive days would be considered an aggravated violation.

I have been asked by several constituents whether or not we have been working on economic issues. This week the House passed Sub SB 196.

Expensing and Job Creation Program Fund  
SB 196 allows for certain business investments to be expensed, phased out or repeals several existing state income and sales tax credits, repeals the Kansas Economic Opportunity Initiative Fund and creates the Job Creation Program Fund.

Expensing Provisions  
The bill allows Kansas businesses who purchase equipment and software to take state tax deductions on equipment and software purchases by immediately expensing these purchases instead of requiring smaller deductions over several years.

Repeal or Modification of Existing Tax Incentives

The bill modifies provisions regarding HPIP income tax credits and retires other credits and exemptions allowed under current law. The intention in doing so is to increase the number of potential businesses that benefit from the state tax policy and to encourage new business in Kansas. This will create more jobs for Kansas.

Job Creation Program Fund

The bill creates the Job Creation Program Fund to promote job creation and economic development by funding projects involving: major expansion of an existing Kansas commercial enterprise; potential relocation to Kansas of a major employer; significant financial matching grant requirements; the potential departure or reduction of operations of an existing employer; training or retraining activities; the possible closure or reduction of a major institution; projects in counties experiencing population decline of more than 10 percent; and other unique economic development opportunities.

### GHS Cowboys of the Week

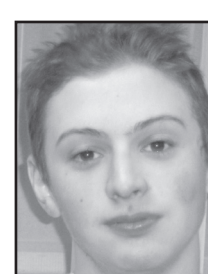
Based on positive academic performance, attendance improvement, positive attitude or random acts of kindness, the student nominees this week are: Blaine Varney and Dylan Kersley.



These students receive an Activity Period Pass. They were randomly selected from all nominees and will receive a local food gift certificate sponsored by Kiwanis, special parking, first in lunch line and recognized throughout the community!



**Blaine Varney, Senior**  
Nominated by: Mr. Meyers  
Parents: Bryan and Lisa Varney  
Activities: DECA



**Dylan Kersley, Junior**  
Nominated by: Mr. Whisnant  
Parents: Tad and Leah Delsing  
Activities: none

Proud Sponsor this week:

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### Special Education records to be destroyed

Special education records which have been collected by the Goodland School District related to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of special education in the district, must be maintained under state and federal laws for a period of five years after special education services have ended for the student. Special education services end when the student is no longer eligible for services, graduates, completes his/her educational program at age 21, or moves from the district. After five years, the records are no longer useful to the district, but may be useful to the parent/guardian or former student in applying for social security benefits, rehabilitation services, college entrance, etc.

This notification is to inform parents/guardians and former students of the Goodland School District's intent to destroy the special education records of students who received special education services during the 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 school years. These records will be destroyed in accordance with state law unless the parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student notifies the school district otherwise.

The records are destroyed approximately two weeks after this official notice is published.

The parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student may request a copy of the records in writing or in person at the following address:

Goodland Schools  
Special Education Department  
P.O. Box 509  
Goodland, KS 67735  
Phone : 785-890-6163  
Attn: Teresa Gotchall



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**TAKE CHARGE CHALLENGE  
GOODLAND COMMUNITY VOTING EVENT  
MAY 16, 2011  
at the CITY OFFICE  
FROM 7 A.M. TO 4 P.M. MT**

**NOTICE TO GOODLAND RESIDENTS:** Goodland is currently winning the Take Charge Challenge! We need your Vote on how to spend the \$100,000. Please stop by the Take Charge Challenge Booth located in the lobby area of the City Office and cast your vote, receive free light bulbs, learn more about the whole house audits and enter a chance to win a \$50 voucher for free energy efficiency products.

**For more information contact the City Office at 890-4500.**