



COLBY FREE PRESS

Expert help



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Andrew Ketchum got a little help from Marguerette Edmundson, a retired senior volunteer, on his second grade butterfly sun-catchers while Paden Ellis worked on his. The second-graders were finishing up a project learning about metamorphosis.

Award surprises Albers

Colby ham radio operator among 27 honored in U.S.

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Mike Albers has been chasing severe storms for more than 20 years, but he never thought he would get an award.

Albers was one of 27 people nationwide recognized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as Environmental Heroes.

Albers' award was for his work as director of the Thomas County Skywarn network.

"I'm speechless," Albers said, when he received the award last Wednesday at a luncheon meeting of the Trojan Ham Radio Club, Colby.

The award and its presentation were a surprise, put together by his wife, Patty, and friends in the club.

Albers directs a network of ham operators who report directly to the National Weather service in Goodland about severe weather.

Albers and Bruce Frahm, another member of the club, also assisted emergency workers in the aftermath of the Hoisington tornado with communications.

According to Scott Mentzer, director of the weather service's Goodland office, the radio operators' work is indispensable. "The Skywarn network in Thomas County has provided the National Weather Service with critical data for years," he said.

"Mike's leadership of Skywarn spotters has been essential in keeping the network activated."

Kevin Lynott, warning coordination meteorologist for the Goodland office,



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Mike Albers (left) talked with Kevin Lynott (center) and Scott Mentzer, from the National Weather Service's Goodland office after receiving a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Environmental Hero award for his volunteer work as director of the Skywarn network in Thomas County.

said Albers was one of the first people to report a 1996 tornado that touched down in Thomas County without being seen by radar.

Lynott added, "He's just been a great volunteer."

Albers was also instrumental in establishing a weather station at Colby High School, Mentzer said. The station provides wind and temperature information to the Goodland office on a continuous basis. Albers has been watching storms since 1977 when he attended his first spotters class while working for the Oakley Police Department. Albers said he hasn't had any

close calls while spotting storms.

"Skywarn is supposed to be a spectator sport, not a participant event," he said.

Skywarn spotters try to stay clear of storms and in safe areas, but Albers admits, "the possibility is always there."

He has been a licensed amateur radio operator for 12 years. Albers is the technology director for the city of Colby.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration awards approximately 25 awards each year, in support of Earth Day.

Chamber recognizes business owners, volunteer and student

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce gave three awards at its annual banquet late last week at the Comfort Inn Convention Center to residents who have given significant time and energy to the community.

Recognized were Kevin and Cindi Kriss as Business Persons of the Year, Cindy Black, Community Service recipient, and Andrew Strange, first place winner in the Schools-to-Careers Business Partners program.

Kathy Owen, president of the Colby Ambassadors, spoke about the Kriss' prior to presenting them with the award.

"Two years ago," she said, "this person and his wife had a dream. In order to fulfill this dream some sacrifices had to be made."

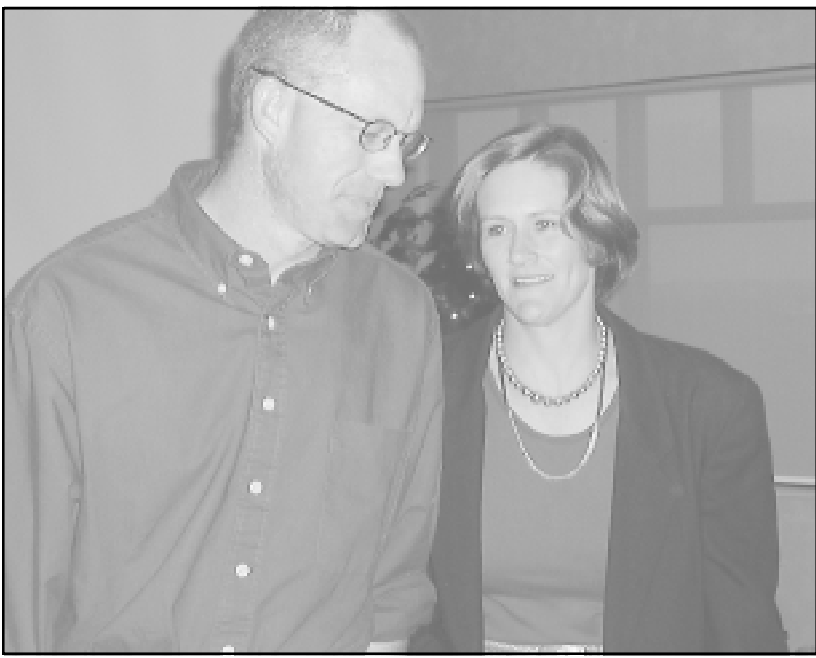
The first, she said, was to leave life-long farming and accounting backgrounds to build a locally-owned business. The second, Owens said, was to take a lumber store that had minimal sales and made it into what is now CK Lumber.

Further recognizing their accomplishments, Owens told more than 200 people attending the banquet that Kevin serves on many boards and is active in the Colby Kids Wrestling Program.

His wife, Cindi, she said, does her share with school activities for their three children and participation in community organizations.

"They are," Owens said, "busy people."

The award given to Black recog-



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Left to right: Cindy Black, Kevin and Cindi Kriss, and Andrew Strange (with Superintendent Kirk Nielsen) received special awards during the Chamber's annual banquet.

nized the many hours she has given to Colby and Thomas County.

Jon Eicher, incoming president of the Chamber, presented her with the award saying, "Cindy has unselfishly taken time away from her business (High Plains Printing) to perform many roles in the community."

Black is active in her church, a former president of a sorority and serves on the city's planning commission.

"She is a graduate of Leadership Thomas County and now spends many volunteer hours in the capacity of leadership," Eicher said.

Recent accomplishments include

the lead volunteer role in the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative, sponsored by the Kansas Health Foundation and co-facilitating this year's leadership class.

"Because of Black's participation in the leadership initiative program," Eicher said, "the Kansas Health Foundation is giving \$100,000 to Thomas County to start a community foundation."

The newest award this year went to Colby Middle School student Andrew Strange for his presentation of the annual business partners program.

Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen recognized all the students and busi-

nesses that took part, adding that in the fall of 1988, the program was created.

"At that time, Kyle Shively, representing the school, along with Laura Cook and Leilani Thomas, with the Chamber, started the program," he said.

"Laura and Leilani spent countless hours making contacts and meeting with local business people and matching students in both eighth and ninth grades."

The program is now available to eighth grade students and, this year, Colby Public Schools received a grant to offer recognition to businesses and students.

"With the grant money," Nielsen said, "we were able to offer money awards for projects done by students and plaques for businesses."

Strange took first place in the first competition with an electronic digital video presentation.

Other winners were Liz Sothman, second place for her scrapbook and a three-way tie for third went to Ashley Backus, Emily Sloan and Angela Taylor for a poster depicting events with their business partners.

The following businesses participated in this year's program: City of Colby, Colby Fire Department, Citizens Medical Center, MC Aviation

Services, Flipse and Flipse Attorneys At Law, Colby Free Press, Colby Police Department, Dillons, Edward D. Jones, Farmers and Merchants Bank, Ramada Inn, Tubbs & Sons Ford Sales, Colby Public Schools, Van's Body and Frame, the Colby Community College Veterinary Technology Department and the college radio station.

Others were Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Harrison Chapel, Personal Touch, Oliver and Associates, PuddleDuck Preschool, Someplace Special, Strait and Associates, Uptown Style, Central Detroit Diesel, Dr. A.J. Warta, Citizens Medical Center and Dr. Scott Haas, DDS.

Briefly

Weather: Rain and cool

Cloudy, cool, rainy, windy. In a nutshell, that's it for the Colby region, says the National Weather Service. Tonight, cloudy, low near 40, an 80 percent chance for rain and northeast winds 10-20 mph and gusty. Friday, cloudy, high around 50, a 100 percent chance for rain and northeast winds 10-20 mph and gusty. Friday night, cloudy, low around 40, a 70 percent chance for rain. Saturday and Sunday, thunderstorms, low in the 40s and high in the 60s. Wednesday's high in Colby was 56 and the overnight low this morning was 42. Precipitation amounted to 0.02 inches up to 8 a.m. today. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 63 degrees. The records for May 3: 96 in 1965 and 22 in 1907. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Group needs officers

Colby Secondary Parent Teacher Student Association still need officers for the year 2001-2002. Call 462-7188.

Booster club fund-raiser continues

The Colby Booster Club still has state championship wrestling t-shirts for sale, said Tami Brown, president. For those wanting to purchase a T-shirt in sizes small to extra-large, call her at 462-7903.

Single dance Friday

The Colby Singles Group will hold its regular monthly dance from 8 to midnight, Friday, May 4. Off Limits of Colby will provide entertainment. For additional information, call Don Birzer, 462-2127.

Hoisington help sought

Heartland Share is taking monetary donations for food shares to be given to the victims of the Hoisington tornado. If any organization would like to contribute to the food shares, leave the donations at the Colby State Farm Insurance office, 905 East 4th, or send to Gene Griffin, 715 W. Walnut, Colby. One food share is \$16.50. Donations are

needed by Thursday, May 10, for the May 19 delivery.

Grade school concert tonight

Colby Elementary fourth grade music and fifth grade band students will hold a concert at 7 p.m., today, in the grade school auditorium. Everyone is invited to attend.

Free physicals Monday

Colby Medical and Surgical Center, 175 S. Range, will be offering free physicals again this year to students in Thomas County on Monday, May 7.

Colby Middle School students are asked to be at the clinic by 5:30 p.m. Colby High School students should arrive by 6:15 p.m. and students from Golden Plains and Brewster are scheduled for 7 p.m. Medical forms should be filled out prior to students taking the physical.

Forms will be provided to students participating in sports next year at their specific school. In addition, due to construction work at the facility, students are asked to use the east entrance on the north end of the building. For questions,

call Jeff Quenzer, activities director, 465-5300.

Benefit supper Saturday

Colby's National Guard Unit is sponsoring a benefit supper for three of its members. The supper will be Saturday, May 5, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the armory.

Proceeds will go to help Sharon Vap, who is going through chemotherapy; Calvin Peck, who severely broke his leg; and Brian Brown, who recently lost his garage and contents in a fire.

The menu includes chili, chicken noodle soup, ham and beans, chili dogs, and desserts. The public is invited to attend and detachment members are asked to bring a dessert. Cost will be free-will donation, organizers said.

Family events continue today

The Greater Northwest Kansas family event will continue today at 7 p.m. at the Colby Community Building featuring Jerry Johnston. Everyone is welcome, organizers said.

