



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## New recycling trailer arrives



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Citizens for Recycling recently got some more good news with the addition of a new trailer and bins in their inventory, said Lynette Koon, Thomas County District Conservation manager. Koon (pictured above) looked over the new items earlier this week that were made possible through a grant. The new trailer will soon be moved to

Brewster and the new bins will be put into a rotation process. The way the process will work, she said, is that when the bins fill up in Brewster, the trailer will be used to transport them back to the Colby center. The full bins will be unloaded by a forklift and the empty bins would be put back on the trailer and return to Brewster.

## I-70 traffic stop yields nearly 50 lbs. of cocaine

By PATTY DECKER  
*Free Press Editor*

The Kansas Highway Patrol seized 46 lbs. of cocaine off Interstate 70, seven miles east of Colby on Thursday afternoon.

The initial stop, which led to the seizure of the cocaine, came about after a trooper spotted a 1998 Nissan Van swerving off the road in the eastbound lane, said Lt. Kelly McGuire, troop commander of the northwest Kansas region. Due to the suspicious nature of the driver, the trooper asked for consent to search and discovered the cocaine in the passenger side air bag.

"This was a good-sized amount of cocaine," he said, "with a street value of about \$1 million."

At this time, names of the two people involved are being withheld and the case has been forwarded to a special task force in Garden City with the Federal Drug Administration. The only information available was that the man was from Georgia and the woman from Florida, he said. The next step will be made by the task force allowing the couple to continue on a controlled delivery in hopes that those further along in the exchange can be arrested, McGuire said.

The total amount of drugs seized off the highway system this year in the 18 counties of northwest Kansas totals

2,246 lbs. of marijuana; 117.2 lbs. of cocaine; 4.5 grams of methamphetamines; and approximately \$247,800 in cash.

"I think our troopers in this area are doing a great job of taking these drugs off the highway system," McGuire said. "And, when considering the fact that drug dealers are running a gauntlet on these thoroughfares, with skilled troopers all across the state looking, it does make me wonder why they continue to attempt to do this."

Yet for every stop a trooper makes, McGuire said, he is convinced that it's only a drop in the bucket. In this area, the highway patrol's region runs a straight line from Ellis-Rush County south of Hays clear to Nebraska going north and from the Ellsworth-Russell County line clear to Colorado.

"We have 30 troopers in our region to cover an area 205 miles long by 120 miles wide and this isn't a full complement," he said. "We need troopers for the region and are expected to have another four filling a few holes in late May."

Although Thursday's seizure was a large amount, it wasn't the largest, he said. The largest cocaine seizure by the highway patrol in Kansas occurred a number of years ago in Olathe, McGuire said, when troopers found more than 100 lbs. inside a fake propane tank.

## Water concerns at courthouse are focus of commission meeting

By MAXINE NELSON

*Colby Free Press*

Jim McGuire, part-time maintenance employee at the courthouse, complained about the water at the Thursday morning meeting of the Thomas County Commissioners.

He said the water has sand and hard water deposits in it, especially first thing in the morning, and he wants water filters on each floor, at a cost of \$35 each.

He said the toilet tanks get up to half an inch of sand in them and he suspects there is a water leak somewhere.

Commission Chair Ron Evans told McGuire he should get a water analysis and report back.

Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock told him to run the water for a while before drinking it.

Evans also said the water pipes in the courthouse are 96 years old, and it would not be surprising if there are

deposits in the pipes.

In other business:

- Noxious weed director Ken Ptacek requested and received approval to attend a state weed meeting in Topeka next Thursday. He also said he wanted to get some different spray equipment for the new pickup. He wants to change out the seats so they can put a spray console between the seats. He said it would cost about \$1,705, and he has \$1,100 in capital outlay fund this year,

but will have some carried over from last year as soon as the auditor completes his report.

The commissioners instructed County Clerk Tracey Perkins to check with the auditor and they will make a decision at the Monday meeting.

The next meeting will be at 9 a.m. Monday in the commissioners room of the courthouse. Emergency Management Director John Lygeros plans to report on the Emergency Operations

Center at the Thomas County Office Complex.

The commissioners plan to invite city officials to listen to a telephone call from someone from Sedgwick County explain the 911 enhanced system as it works there.

They would like to include locations for cell phones in the system.

The commissioners will also make a decision on the radios needed for the Senior Progress Center for the trans-

portation van.

Road department supervisor Chris Bieker will bring bids for the pickup/packer. The sheriff will give his annual report; and Martin Rinehart of Thomas County Emergency Medical Services will discuss raising base rates to cover the additional cost of the first responder to ambulance calls.

The commissioners also wanted to remind everyone that meetings are open to the public.

## Man injured in accident Thursday

By PATTY DECKER

*Free Press Editor*

A three-vehicle accident late Thursday morning sent one man to the hospital when the car he was driving ran a red light while going west on U.S. Highway 24 (Range Ave. and Fourth St.), said Colby Police Chief Randy Jones.

The injured driver, Virgil Kracke, 77, was taken by Thomas County ambulance personnel to Citizens Medical Center where he was treated and re-

leased on Thursday.

Kracke, who was driving a 1999 Mercury, was westbound on U.S. 24, when he ran the red light and a second car driven by Nyla Beall, of Atwood, traveling northbound on Highway 25 struck Kracke's vehicle when he failed to yield to the stoplight.

The third vehicle involved was a Freightliner tractor, driven by Jeffrey Hudson of Valley Center, who was waiting at the light in the eastbound lane on U.S. Highway 24.

When Kracke's vehicle and Beall's vehicle collided, the result was that Kracke's vehicle was pushed into the semi-tractor and ended up still in the westbound lane of U.S. 24, Jones said.

The accident report was called in at 11:46 a.m. and, along with Colby Police officials responding, assistance was given by the Thomas County Sheriff's Office, Colby Fire Department, and an officer with the Kansas Highway Patrol Motor Carrier Inspection Division.

## Senate rejects making divorce harder

By JOHN HANNA

*Associated Press Writer*

TOPEKA (AP) — The Senate rejected a bill making it harder for some couples to divorce, after members argued over how far the state should go to save troubled marriages.

Under the bill, the state would permit no-fault divorce only for couples without dependent children living at home. No-fault divorce allows couples to end a marriage without one spouse having to allege wrongdoing by the other. The vote Thursday was 15-25.

Supporters said state law makes it too easy for one spouse to end a marriage. Sen. Ed Pugh, R-Wamego, said

marriages take a lot of work — and pointed to his own.

"I may go home tonight and have a summons nailed to my head," he joked. "I've given her plenty of reasons over the past 28 years."

Critics said the state should not try to save troubled marriages when it doesn't know the circumstances.

"I don't believe this Legislature can engineer social relationships," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman John Vratil, R-Leawood.

State law provides three general grounds for divorce: incompatibility, failure to perform a material marital duty, or mental illness or mental inca-

capacity. There is no requirement that both spouses agree to the divorce.

Under the bill, couples without dependent children from the marriage living at home could still get what amounts to a no-fault divorce if both were in agreement.

But if there were dependent children from the marriage, or if one spouse objected to the divorce, then the spouse seeking to end the marriage would have to allege one of nine grounds — as was the case before no-fault divorce was adopted three decades ago.

Supporters said a high divorce rate threatens the fabric of society and traumatizes many children.

## Making bail



JAY KELLY/Colby Free Press

The American Heart Association's annual fund-raiser, Cardiac Arrest, which was held recently in Colby, brought in approximately \$8,500 for the organization, said Randall Braden, coordinator. A majority of the funds received will go toward biomedical research leading to advances in CPR, bypass surgery, the heart-lung machine and surgeries to repair heart defects. Pictured above is Dave Jennings, playing the judge, with Ralph Foster paying his bail.

## Briefly

### Weather: Improving

Improving conditions can be expected tonight and through the weekend for the Colby area, says the National Weather Service. Tonight, a 30 percent chance for lingering snow showers, becoming partly cloudy, lows near zero and winds north 10-15 mph. Saturday, sunny, highs in the upper teens to around 20 and north winds 10-15 mph. Saturday night, clear, lows zero to +5. Sunday, sunny, highs in the 30s and Monday, clear, lows around 10 and highs in the 40s. Colby's high Thursday was 52 and the overnight low this morning was 11. There were no snow totals available. The records for March 1: 81 in 1972 and -14 in 1960. *(The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided*

*by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

### Singles dance cancelled

The Colby Singles Group cancelled its regular monthly dance scheduled for tonight due to weather, said Don Birzer, coordinator.

### Gem Lions sponsor soup supper

Gem Lions Club will have its annual winter soup supper on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the new Gem Community Building (formerly the Gem Baptist Church). The menu includes vegetable, potato and chili, along with crack-

ers and corn bread, said Ken Poland, publicity chair. The cost of the soup supper is a free-will donation with proceeds used to benefit the Gem community. Also, everyone is welcome to bring old eyeglasses and hearing aids for recycling. For questions or information, call 462-7809.

### Lawmakers, candidates to Colby

Sen. Stan Clark and Rep. Jim Morrison are inviting everyone to a town hall meeting on Monday, March 4, at the City Limits Restaurant, 2227 S. Range, with a dutch treat meal starting at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting beginning at 7 p.m. Both Clark and Morrison said they will share their perspective about some of the important issues before the

Kansas legislature this session and want to hear from others on these and other issues. Joining them will be state treasurer and governor candidate Tim Shallenburger and former state representative and chairman of the House tax and appropriations committees Phill Kline, who is a candidate for attorney general with plans to visit with area residents about their candidacy and vision for leading Kansas.

### Site council meeting Monday

The Colby Grade School Site Council will hold its regular meeting Monday, March 4, beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria. Everyone is welcome to attend this meetings, said Terrel Harrison, principal.

