



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## It's official: two doctors, surgeon resign

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

Thomas County Commissioners lent a sympathetic ear today to Scott Focke, clinic manager for the Family Center for Health Care, as he presented the clinic's current position to them during their end of the month meeting.

Focke confirmed the official resignations of both Dr. Eric Jacobsen and Dr. Jeff Kasselman. Jacobsen's resignation will be effective on July 18, while, Kasselman's will be effective on Aug. 9.

Focke also informed the commissioners of the resignation of Colby surgeon, Mohammad Fercha.

Without Fercha's position in the community as a surgeon, the only other doctor to handle obstetrics would be Dr. Victor Hildyard III.

The Family Center for Health Care has its doctors contracted through Preferred Medical Associates, while Via Christi Medical Management hires the rest of the staff. Both are based out of Wichita. The building is owned by Citizens Medical Center.

With the current doctor situation, Preferred Medical Associates feels they cannot represent the doctors as well as they should, and want to pull their services from the Colby area, said Focke.

Preferred Medical Associates is willing to stay in the area if an interested purchaser for the clinic is found before Aug. 9.

Focke informed the commissioners of the drastic economic effect the loss of the clinic would have on Colby.

"The clinic currently sees between 70 and 90 patients a day. Of those numbers, 40-45 percent travel from outside of Colby," said Focke, "This will have a huge economic impact on the community."

In response to Focke's presentation, the commissioners took no stance on the situation.

Commissioner Ron Evans said, "I will tell you like I have told others who have asked me about the doctor situation, we (Thomas County Commissioners) don't have anything to do with it."

## School board looks at downtown site

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

The Colby Board of Education voted this morning to pursue the purchase of a downtown building to house its administration offices. The building, located at 390 North Franklin, is for sale at a price of \$110,000. It formerly housed the law offices of Starkey & Gatz.

The board discussed a ten-year purchase deal for the building. Rock Bedore, of Farm and Ranch Realty of Colby, told the board that he thought it would be easy to find an investor for the building, who would then deal with the school board on the purchase.

"We can pay for this building with what we would save on utilities," board member Cathy Gordon said. After discussion, the consensus among the board members was that they were definitely interested, and would pursue the purchase. Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said the matter would be brought back for July's board meeting.

Nielsen asked the board to discuss whether it should budget some money to help various clubs in the school district which don't generate revenue, rather than having those clubs going door-to-door to raise funds.

"I would also recommend that those clubs which are doing fund-raising offer some kind of service or product for money that is donated," Nielsen

said. Nielsen gave the board a sheet in which all activities and clubs would list their fund-raising activities. "That way you'll know ahead of time who is doing what as far as raising money," he said.

The board voted to approve the year-end transfer of funds in the amount of \$1,633,786. This amount is contingent on the receipt of \$335,672 from the state of Kansas, which is expected to arrive next week.

The board also approved the out-of-district school attendance at Golden Plains schools for Michael and Brian Downing, Michael Wilson, and Nichole, Brett, Rilee, Grant, and Hailee Spresser. "These kids live practically in Gem," Nielsen said. "I don't see a problem with them going to school there."

The board discussed making minor changes to the district handbook, voted to appoint Boyd Walker as its representative to the Northwest Kansas Technical College Advisory Board, appointed John Gatz as their attorney, and approved a garage sale to dispose of old books and out-dated equipment.

"I'll vote for it if you promise to donate anything you can't sell to the Heartland Christian School instead of hauling it off to the landfill," board member Bill Miller said. "I'd rather see someone getting some use out of it rather than just throwing it away."



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Lindsey McClure scans groceries at Dillons supermarket in Colby. Dillons cash registers will be automatically updated from Hutchinson early Monday morning to reflect the increase in the state sales tax which takes effect Monday.

## Monday to bring hike in state sales tax

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

The 2002 Kansas Legislature approved several tax changes that will take affect Monday.

The state's sales tax will increase from 4.9 percent to 5.3 percent. In Thomas County, the sales tax will be 6.3 percent, according to Thomas County Treasurer Donita Applebury.

"Also, effective Monday, vehicle tag costs will increase by \$5," she said.

The state tax on motor fuels will increase two cents per gallon from 21 to 23 cents for gasoline and gasohol, and 23 to 25 cents for diesel. The cigarette tax jumps from 24 cents to 70 cents per pack.

Vehicle purchasers, at registra-

tion, will be required to pay the difference between the local sales tax rate at the seller's location and the purchaser's residence, if the seller's rate is lower." In other words," Applebury explained, "If you buy a car in Hoxie and the sales tax is 5.3 percent, you'll have to pay the extra 1 percent when you register the car here in Thomas County." This new provision also applies to long-term vehicle leases.

Telephone calling cards sold in monetary denominations will be subject to sales tax, says the state's Department of Revenue.

Income tax changes include a boost in the Kansas Earned Income credit from 10 to 15 percent of the federal credit. New legislation increases the food sales tax rebate amount and indexes qualifying income threshold

amounts for inflation.

Discontinued is the "married filing joint" status on income tax returns for common law marriages created after June 30, 2002, if either party is under the age of 18.

A new state succession tax became effective June 6 of this year. Estates that include property passing to any person not a spouse, sibling, lineal ancestor, or lineal descendant of the decedent are now subject to a Kansas succession tax, regardless of the estate size. Tax rates are 10 percent on the first \$100,000, then 12 percent on \$100,001 to \$200,00, and 15 percent above \$200,000. As far as implementing the new sales tax, most retailers are automated, including the treasurer's office.

"When we come in Monday morning," Applebury said, "all of the

changes will have already been downloaded from Topeka."

Barb Lewis, manager of Dillons supermarket in Colby, said all of the changes to the grocery store's registers would be downloaded from Hutchinson. "Monday at 1 a.m. they'll make the changes from there," she said.

Mark Beringer of Beringer Hardware in Colby isn't so lucky. "It'll take about 3 or 4 hours total to change over to the new tax," he said. Beringer also will have to change over the registers at Colby Photo, which he owns with his wife Ardath, as well as Corner Cutter Plus, his framing store in Hoxie. "It's not just the registers," Beringer said, "we'll also have to change our computer systems."

## Court puts Pledge of Allegiance ruling on hold

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A much-maligned ruling on the Pledge of Allegiance is on hold while a federal appeals court decides how to deal with calls for a rehearing in the case.

Judge Alfred T. Goodwin, who wrote the 2-1 opinion that said schools cannot have students recite the pledge, prevented it from taking effect until the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decides whether it wants to alter course. He gave no reason.

Attorney General John Ashcroft said Thursday the Justice Department will request a hearing by an 11-judge panel. As of Thursday afternoon, court clerk Cathy Catterson said no petitions for a rehearing had been submitted.

Gov. Gray Davis and school officials in the town of Elk Grove, where the plaintiff lives, both promised to appeal.

The appeals court can rehear the case with the same three judges, or an 11-judge panel. Goodwin's action has no immediate result, since the ruling already was on hold by court rules for 45 days to allow for any challenges.

Goodwin stunned people across the political spectrum when he declared

that reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools is unconstitutional because the phrase "one nation under God" amounts to a government endorsement of religion. The words "under God" were inserted by Congress in 1954 after a campaign by the Knights of Columbus, a Roman Catholic organization.

Vikram Amar, a Hastings College of the Law scholar, said Goodwin's latest opinion "has no legal force or effect" for the time being.

"They're acknowledging the likelihood that the whole 9th Circuit may take a look at this," Amar said.

Given the public outrage over the initial ruling, Goodwin wanted to make clear that children, for now, are not barred from reciting the pledge in class, legal experts said.

"This is not your ordinary run-of-the-mill decision," said Douglas Mirell, a Los Angeles-based constitutional law attorney. "Extraordinary cases may require extraordinary measures in order to clarify for the public and the world exactly what the results of the case are.

### Local reaction gauged

The ruling by the California Supreme Court has prompted some citizens in Colby to speak up on the Pledge of Allegiance controversy.

"Once you start taking stuff out, where do you stop?" Colby Board of Education member Bill Miller said. "As far as I'm concerned, if those people don't like it, there are lots of other places they can go live."

Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said, "This will be overturned so fast that I don't think it will have much impact here in Colby. I'm not worried about it."

Kansas Representative Jim Morrison of Colby said "the courts have overstepped their bounds. Separation of powers is being violated by the courts and they are abusing it."

"They are not just interpreting, but changing and making new law. They are changing the constitution with this ruling," said.

"It appears that with this ruling the minority have the right to rule over majority more and more, and that's not constitutional."

"The Constitution does not protect the minority, it protects the majority. Courts are supposed to protect the little guy."

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ruling was in response to a California atheist's bid to keep his daughter from being exposed to religion in school.

The decision was met with widespread criticism, including from Congress and President Bush.

Perkins, county clerk, at 462-4500.

### Fireworks display next week

The Kiwanis Club of Thomas County is sponsoring the annual 4th of July community fireworks display. The event will be held at the Thomas County Fairgrounds next Thursday at 10:15 p.m. Anyone interested in assisting the club is still encouraged to send donations to the organization. All contributions can be mailed to Kiwanis Club of Thomas County, P.O. Box 501, Colby, Kan., 67701.

### How does 304 degrees sound?

If the forecast for the Colby area holds up, the combined Saturday-Sunday-Monday high temperatures will total 304 degrees. The National Weather Service is calling for Saturday's high to be near 102, Sunday's high near 102 and Monday's high near 100. Overnight lows will generally be in the upper 60s. No precipitation is mentioned and Saturday will be breezy with southerly winds 15-25 mph. Colby's high Thursday was 96 and the overnight low this morning was 60. Precipitation for the month remains at 1.42 inches.

The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth continues to average 83 degrees. The records for June 28: 105 in 1933 and 41 in 1985. td. (The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Singing group visits tonight

A group of young people from California, Canada and other areas across the nation, will be singing at Fike Park in Colby tonight, beginning at 7 p.m., as part of their interdominational mission work. A free-will donation will be accepted for those attending, who would like to assist with touring expenses.

### Commissioners meet Monday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet Monday at 9 a.m. in the courthouse. As of press time, the only item on the agenda was a discussion with Sue Taylor, director of the Thomas County Historical Society. All meetings are open to the public. For questions on the agenda, call Tracey

### Thumbs Up!

- ✓Francis Britton — welcome back to the council.
- ✓Bill Keck — you served the city very well.
- ✓Larry Booth — thanks for sharing your talent.
- ✓Tyler Breeden — this year's Colby Free Press/merchants "Harvest Countdown" winner.
- ✓Celebrant Singers — welcome to Colby.
- ✓Alex Kleinsorge — astronaut in-waiting.
- ✓Curt Beringer — Colby High School's delegate to Boys' State.
- ✓Lisa Jones — dreams do come true.
- ✓Willie Engelhardt — maybe batteries would help the rain gauge.

(Please call the Free Press at 462-3963 to include someone in this weekly salute.)

## Briefly

