



COLBY FREE PRESS

College's focus on numbers

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS
Colby Free Press

Boosting enrollment is the name of the game at Colby Community College.

Dr. Mikel Ary, president, presented a list of things the college is doing, or is planning to do to boost numbers, to the board of trustees at their Monday night meeting.

One item is to provide Internet access for all students in the door rooms. Currently, he said, there is Internet access in the lobbies of each living facility, but the feeling is to be competitive there is a need to make it available in the rooms for students to use with their personal computers.

Five "Smart Classrooms" were set up using Perkins money, Ary said. These classroom are technologically designed to support wireless computers in the classroom.

Other initiatives include adding a new major in the area of computer science; the addition of a new admissions officer; recruitment of outreach students including senior citizens in the 28 outreach towns served by the college; agreements in the works with Colby and Goodland to provide a one-year graduation for those students who take college classes while in high school; investing in the college's infrastructure with the addition of the wellness center; and an area-wide survey that was conducted regarding admissions.

Ary also reported numbers are up in the areas of track, horse production and criminal justice, despite the fact the number of foreign students is down following Sept. 11, 2001.

In other business, the board:

- Approved the company Montana Banana to make an assessment for reconstructing the website. The project will be paid for by grant money provided by the Hansen Foundation and will cost in total \$18,000.

- Approved an agreement with the Thomas County Fair Board for the use of the grounds by the college rodeo team. The agreement went up by \$300 this year to a total of \$3,300, which includes a \$500 deposit.

- Approved a contract continuation for Dr. Max Pickerill to continue to teach for the 2003-2004 academic year.

- Regretfully accepted the resignation of Tracey Stark, the director of nursing.

- Decided to table discussion on the Wellness Center until the May 5 meeting, as they narrow the design field from three to one.

- Went into executive session to discuss negotiations for 45 minutes.



Much warmer

Tonight...clear. Lows in the upper 30s. South wind 10 to 15 mph. Thursday...mostly sunny and continued warm. Highs in the mid 70s. Northwest wind 10 to 15 mph becoming northeast late. Thursday night...mostly clear. Lows near 40. Friday...mostly sunny. Highs in the mid 70s. Friday night...mostly clear. Lows in the lower 40s. Saturday...mostly clear and warmer. Highs in the lower 80s.

The numbers
Tuesday's high, 51
Low this morning, 24
Soil temperature, 45
Year ago, 72 and 35
Month's precipitation, 0.30
Month's snowfall, 2 inches
Records, 93 in 1930 and 14 in 1973



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

They're ready to roll

Members of the Tumbleweed Chorus continued practicing for their upcoming performance, "Dixieland Harmony," on Saturday, April 26 in two performances, at 3 and 7:30 p.m., in the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College. Tickets are available in advance for \$7, or \$8 at the door. The program will feature guest appearances by Very Light Opera Company of Colorado Springs, Colo., and Patent Pending of Kearney, Neb. Pictured above are (back row): Brett Bandy, John Collett, (middle row) Ryan Edmundson, Jim Rarick, (front row) Bruce Frahm, Steve Ottem and Owen Herndon.

Sears, Cousins treatment is under fire

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

Two new trustees were named Tuesday to replace Judith Sears and Terry Cousins on the Citizens Medical Center board of trustees, according to information released at the Area Citizens for Health Care meeting Tuesday night.

Kathy Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer and Craig Hills, who were part of the general membership board, were appointed by Vern Schwanke, president of the board of trustees, said Dave Jennings, who spoke at the Area Citizens meeting.

Jennings, who is also part of the 20-member board with Citizens Medical Center, said he was approached to serve as a trustee following action to remove Sears and Cousin's subsequent resignation, but chose not to do so out of respect for those two people.

"In my 32 years of attending 4,000 or more different board meetings," Jennings said, "I believe that what happened to those two ladies (Sears and Cousins) was the absolutely worst thing I've ever seen a board do to their fellow board members."

"It (the meeting and action taken) was indescribable and I personally felt so bad for Judith and Terry," he said.

With more than 100 people attending the Area Citizens meeting, many asked Jennings what he could say about the recent hospital board meeting. Jennings told the group

“...What happened to those two ladies (Sears and Cousins) was the absolutely worst thing I’ve ever seen a board do to their fellow board members.” — Dave Jennings

that he wasn't sure how much he could say due to confidentiality.

"I will say that something has to give somewhere and somehow," he said, but declined answering any specific questions regarding financial status or other issues discussed.

"Lines have been drawn in the sand (between the hospital and the issues with Dr. Victor Hildyard) and there may not be enough time left to salvage the medical community, if all we are interested is that line," he said.

John Kern, president of the Area Citizens board, agreed with Jennings as did a near unanimous majority of those attending, that both Cousins and Sears had a right to carry differing views. He said he too was appalled that they were forced off because there views were not the same as the five other trustees.

It also prompted Kern to ask those present to help in an effort to make the hospital board of trustees listen to them.

Jennings said the economic impact of what's happening can also be felt with those employed at Citizens Medical Center.

"I had a man come in my store the other day and he said that if his wife loses her job at the hospital, the fam-

ily will be forced to head out of town," he said.

In the event this scenario is not an isolated one, Jennings said he believes this could have huge repercussions since the hospital employs many in the area.

"I cannot believe anybody wants that," Jennings said.

Kern added that he cannot even understand what the "fight" is even all about anymore. "One time we will hear it's over an EMTALA violation (which is basically known as patient dumping), then it's patient care, and another time it's sexual harassment," he said.

Jennifer Woofert, who is also a board member of Area Citizens, said many of the hospital board members have said they don't want anyone coming back on their businesses and hurting their livelihoods, but when it comes to Dr. Hildyard and Colby Medical and Surgical Center, it appears they aren't even "blinking an eye" to ruin this physician and those in his business or his patients.

Dennis Horney, another Area Citizens board member, said everyone's voice needs to be heard and that it should be done "right and peacefully."

"There's not much time left in my

opinion" Kern said about the hospital's stability. "We all need to have something waiting in the wings and we need to talk with the county commissioners about setting up an election to put the hospital on the tax rolls when it's gone."

Kern said, in his opinion, the hospital board has a vendetta against the doctor that is so strong they are willing to bankrupt the hospital rather than let Dr. Hildyard continue to care for his patients the way he has for the last 28 years.

"I hope I am wrong, but it even appears that they do not care how much they hurt anyone or even about the Colby economy and the business they cause to go to other towns," he said.

Kern asked everyone present to contact hospital board members and let their feelings be known. Those attending asked what they could do to help. Some suggestions included radio talk shows, a letter campaign in newspapers and to board members, calling board members and even driving around with signs on cars near the hospital.

"We cannot tell you what to think or what to do," Horney said, "and we will not advocate boycotts."

Les Haremza, attending the meeting, challenged others to talk

with hospital board members and ask them one question. "Ask them why there are seven members on the hospital board of trustees?" The answer, he said, should be to allow for varying opinions and ideas in an effort to find solutions to problems, adding that by recalling the only two people who held different views from the other five, that this is not possible.

Kern said today he is inviting everyone who cares about health care to attend Monday's Thomas County Commissioner's meeting at 9 a.m. At that time, Kern and whoever else attends will be asking the county what steps need to happen to call for a vote to place the hospital in county control.

Florence Messamore, who also attended the meeting, said she was under an HMO for three months while in Arizona. "It is frightening," she said about the HMO, "because you see a different doctor every week and there's no consistency with medications or care," she said.

Some of those attending said they may not have any friends left after all this is said and done, but more than 75 people said they don't want to see the hospital become an HMO and Kern and others believe that is where it's headed.

For those wanting a list of the hospital board membership or voting membership, Kern encourages them to call for a list of addresses and telephone numbers should they want to contact them.

Kindergarten roundup noted

Heartland Christian School in Colby is looking toward the new school year next fall and in line with those plans announced this week

that kindergarten roundup will be held on Friday from 8:20 to 11:30 a.m. at the school, 1995 W. Fourth Street.

All students entering kindergarten for the 2003-2004 school year are invited to attend with their parents.

To reserve your child's place or to receive additional information, please contact the school office at 462-6419.

Briefly

Dible benefit scheduled Saturday

A benefit for Ken (Butch) Dible, former resident of Colby and a former reserves police officer, will be held Saturday at the National Guard Armory in Colby from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. He has been diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia and is receiving treatment in Wichita.

Drawings, a silent auction, karaoke, homemade chili, noodle soup and cinnamon rolls are on the menu. The Colby Police Department will have its Ident-a-kid program available starting at noon. Ryan Wark will have his stock car 8FR available for all the see.

Free will donations will be accepted.

Easter egg hunt getting closer

The Colby Kiwanis Club will sponsor its annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday at Fike Park for children from birth to 9 years old. For those three and under, the hunt will begin at 10 a.m.; ages 4 to 6 at 10:10 a.m.; and children 7 to 9 at 10:20 a.m.

Fair board to meet Thursday

The Thomas County Fair Board will meet on Thursday at the 4-H building at 8 p.m. Committee reports will be given from building and grounds, carnival, rodeo, parade, demolition derby, races, fair book and advertising. The board will also discuss a replacement for ground's keeper, the barbecue, a slab dance and the queen and princess contest. The meeting is open to the public.

Brewster Band supper is Friday

The Brewster Band and guests, and the Goodland High School Jazz Band, will hold a soup supper and benefit concert at 5:45 p.m. on Friday at the Brewster School. Proceeds from the supper will be used by the Brewster Band to attend and perform at a music in the park program in Denver.

Endowment annual meeting set

The Colby Community College Endowment Association

will hold its annual meeting on April 14, at 5:30 p.m. All members are urged to attend. It will be held in the Fireside Lounge in the Robert Burnett Memorial Student Union. For more information, contact Nick Wells at (785) 462-4684.

'Church open for prayer

Rev. Carol Rahn, pastor for the First Presbyterian Church in Colby, has announced the church will be open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. while the country is at war. Those wishing to pray or have quiet meditation may use the church at 515 W. Fourth Street.

Art exhibit continues at college

Diane Frazey Mahanna's art exhibit continues at the Cultural Arts Center gallery at Colby Community College. Kathy Gordon, art instructor, said the exhibit can be seen from 1 to 5 p.m. daily or on weekends by prior arrangements. For questions, call Gordon at 462-3984, ext. 310.

