



COLBY FREE PRESS

Wellness Fair highlights



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press



Chelsie, 8, and Christian Calliham, 4, of Colby (above) were among many children attending the Colby Wellness Fair, Saturday, at Colby Community College. Elaine Ptacek (above left) with Heartland Rural Counseling showed children techniques on how to calm down by making turtles. Rich and Susie Calliham are Chelsie and Christian's parents. Gina Jennings (at left) and one of the occupational therapists at Citizens Medical Center tested Janice Konrade (left) of Abilene for osteoporosis. Tina Harris (foreground), a physical therapist was also on hand to talk with fairgoers on health issues. Numbers for the fair were up this year, but final totals and other highlights from Saturday's event will appear in a later edition.

Council to look at awarding bids; closing access road

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council is expected to take action on updated weather observation system when it meets at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in the council chambers of city hall.

The updated equipment has already been approved by the Kansas Department of Transportation on a 75 percent state and 25 percent local basis, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

Prior to Tuesday's meeting, she said, the city's airport board has recommended approval.

Another agenda item the council will discuss is closing the exit on the access road north of E. 4th St. at Country Club Dr. Armstrong said the closure of this access road was recommended by the state's transportation department after completing a safety road audit in Thomas County.

Property owners in that area have been notified, she said, and the council will begin discussion on the issue.

Other agenda items include awarding bids for a fire rescue truck, which was on the 2003 budget; a request from the Northwest Kansas Family Shelter for money in 2004; and a review of the disadvantaged business enterprise policy, which is a condition of the airport grant currently pending.

The council will go behind closed doors to talk about water rights and there will be reports and discussions to include showing members the new educational fire safety house at 7 p.m. and exploring new budget items in 2005.

All meetings are open to the public and a copy of the agenda is available at Colby City Hall, 585 N. Franklin or by calling (785) 462-4410.

Colby school district out of old building

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

It's mostly official now. The Colby school district's administration is almost completely done moving into its new building at the grade school campus.

Colby school Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said the district's administration staff is all moved in.

The building houses Nielsen, his executive assistant, the school board clerk, the technology director, curriculum director and her secretary, the school's copy center and school board room.

"It's great to be here and out of that other building," Nielsen said.

He said it brings the administration closer to the schools and will save the district money on utility bills. Nielsen estimated in six or seven years, the savings on the utility bills will pay for the building.

Nielsen said there will be an open house for district staff and the public once everyone gets settled in the building.

However, despite the fact everyone is getting used to their new surroundings, the district still has to deal with some of the items that were stored at the old building.

He said the staff moved into the new building over Christmas break and is now completely out of the old building.

Nielsen said the school system will host an auction, pending board approval at its meeting Monday night, to dispose of the items.

The auction is scheduled for 1 p.m. Friday, Jan. 30 at the southeast corner of the football field. He said items up for sale will include old desks, tables, picture frames, gym mats, cabinets, a wood working bench and many other items.

Conservation Service in Colby gets new resources agent

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Farmers and ranchers in the county have a new resource at the United States Department of Agriculture service center in Colby.

Andy Baker started at the Natural Resources Conservation Service offices in November at the United States Department of Agriculture service center.

Originally from Wisconsin, Baker worked at the Atwood field office for about a year before coming to Colby. Baker is a conservation specialist with the conservation service. He received his degree in reclamation and environmental conservation from the University of Wisconsin - Clarkville.



Andy Baker recently joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture service center in Colby.

"It's more the conservation side of things than agriculture," Baker said.

His family farmed and that was what helped him decide to go into conservation.

"I just went in that direction," he said.

Baker works with landowners and operators to help install conservation tools on their land or help implement changes in their land management practices.

He said the Natural Resources Conservation Service has programs to protect and conserve environmental resources such as soil, water and habitat. They also have some livestock programs.

He said he hasn't been able to get

out in the field much in Thomas County yet but Baker is looking forward to it.

"I enjoy getting outside and working with farmers and ranchers," he said. "It's nice to get outside and work."

Because it's winter, most of the work at the office right now are Conservation Reserve Program contracts and planning ahead for spring.

Two upcoming programs Baker is helping get the word out about are a Conservation Security Program public meeting Jan. 23 and Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

He said the public meeting the Conservation Security Program

will be from 1 to 4 p.m. Friday, Jan. 23 at the BiCentennial Center, 800 Midway, in Salina.

People will get five minutes each to give their input on the program, which provides payment to producers who maintain and improve the condition of the natural resources under their care.

Baker also said the cutoff date to sign up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program is March 12. The program provides funds to help pay for conservation practices for water quality, grazing lands, soil, water and air quality and water quantity.

For information, call the Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Colby at 462-7482.



Not much change

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie area Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Lows around 20. Southwest winds around 5 mph shifting to the northwest after midnight. **Tuesday...**Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid 30s. North winds 5 to 10 mph. **Tuesday night...**Mostly cloudy. Lows around 20. Northwest winds 5 to 10 mph. **Wednesday...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 30s. Northwest winds 10 to 15 mph. **Wednesday Night through Friday Night...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the 40s. Lows around 20.

The numbers
Sunday's high, N/A
Low this morning, N/A
Records for Jan. 19, 70 in 1911 and -21 in 1984
Year ago today, 65 and 17
Month's precipitation, 0.05
Month's snowfall, 1 inch
2003 precipitation to date, trace
Soil temperature, 34
The sources:
The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119.

Briefly

Deadline Tuesday for seminar

There will be a "Planning for Success Seminar," Thursday, Jan. 29 at City Limits Convention Center in Colby. The event starts with registration at 9:30 a.m. followed by workshops starting at 9:50 a.m. Topics include profile of a successful ag operation, financial challenges of beginning farms, legal overview, risk management and marketing, tenant/landlord relationships, getting the most out of your banker and services for beginning farmers. Pre-registration is due for meal purposes Tuesday to the Thomas County Extension Office at (785) 462-4582.

College board meets Tuesday

The Colby Community College board of trustees will hold its regular meeting at 5 p.m., Tuesday. Items on the agenda include contract clarification, sealed bids for sale of auto, approval of amendments and compliance to cafeteria plan, approval of contracts, approval of agreements, president's evaluation, payment of claims and negotiations.

Promotion meeting planned

The next Colby Business Promotion meeting will be held

at 7:30 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 27, in the basement of Sunflower Bank, 500 N. Franklin. The promotion meeting is open to all businesses in Colby.

Barbecue, open house planned

There will be a benefit barbecue and open house on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Heartland Christian School, 1995 W. 4th in Colby.

In addition to the barbecue, which will feature barbecued meat, baked potatoes, corn, rolls, salad and dessert bar, an auction will be held. Auction items include handmade quilts, bed and breakfast package and more

Rotary soup supper next month

The annual Colby Rotary soup supper will be from 5 to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 17, during the Colby High School basketball game against Goodland at the Colby Community Building. All proceeds from this event go to benefit various organizations. Tickets will be available at the door or from any Rotary Club member.

Ag profitability meeting set

The 2004 Ag Profitability Conference will be from 8:30

a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 5, in Colby.

The event begins with registration at 8:30 a.m. followed by a presentation on water issues in western Kansas, breakout sessions, lunch, a presentation on land values and cash rents. Registration is due by Thursday, Jan. 29.

For information, contact the Thomas County Extension Office at 462-4582.

Amusement group meets tonight

The Thomas County Amusement Association will meet at 7 p.m. tonight at the Thomas County Office Complex. With only a little over six months left until the 2004 Thomas County Fair, association members need to continue preparations. Anyone wanting to offer assistance is encouraged to attend the meeting.

Obedience school Tuesday

The Thomas County Trackers 4-H Dog Club will once again be offering obedience training this winter and spring. Although the orientation meeting was last Tuesday, interested persons can still attend this Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the 4-H building. For questions, call (785) 460-3816.

