



COLBY FREE PRESS

It's official!



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Kenton Krehbiel, Colby's new postmaster, was sworn in Friday with the assistance of his wife, Sheila, who held the Bible for the ceremony and Mark Kerschen, manager of post office opera-

tions for western Kansas, who presided over the ceremony. Family, friends and members of the community were present with refreshments afterwards.

Survey aimed at teen alcohol, drug abuse

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Regional Prevention Center is trying to get a better idea of how parents around the area view alcohol and drug abuse among teenagers.

Sue Evans, director of the Regional Prevention Center, said a \$61,615 grant from the federal Office of Justice helped fund surveys

that were sent out to the parents of sixth, eighth, tenth and twelfth grade students in Colby and Goodland.

She said parents and children have varying ideas about how many people they think are using alcohol or drugs when the reality can be quite different. Evans said parents might think many youth are doing what they shouldn't be, but in some

cases not everyone is drinking or taking drugs.

She's hoping that is the case and added that the survey will help people get a more realistic view of the circumstances.

"We're encouraging parents to send them back," she said. "We want a good response and it's anonymous. This is new."

Evans said the grant the center

received is the only drug prevention grant that goes directly to the community that wrote it. Usually, money is distributed at the federal or state level.

After they get the survey results back, the center will be working with an ad agency and creating focus groups to develop a message to help curb underage drinking in the area.

Town hall meetings

Health care and school finance aired Saturday

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

A group of 19 people showed up for a town hall meeting with state Senator Stan Clark and Rep. Jim Morrison Saturday in Colby at the Thomas County Office Complex. It was one of eight stops for the duo during a day-long meeting marathon.

Health care and school finance were the two main topics at the Colby stop.

Clark said if health care costs continue to rise, there won't be money for anything else.

In November, legislation was introduced in Congress to allow individuals to put \$2,000 in a health savings account. Unused vacation and sick days could be put toward the account and could be used for normal medical expenditures, like visits to the doctor, Clark said.

"Both the employee and the employer can contribute," he said, but added it's not yet available in Kansas. However, it is a priority by July 1.

"That's part of what we are work-

ing on," he said.

Also, Clark said President Bush is encouraging a \$1,000 tax reduction for singles and a \$3,000 for families if they buy health insurance. The tax credit would be an incentive to help make people more responsible when it comes to health care.

"In Kansas we encourage all health plans to have certain coverages," Clark said.

On the other side of the coin, Morrison talked about school finance. He handed out several sheets, including one on an alternative school finance formula and testimony on House Bill 2807.

He explained that currently school finance is based on a maximum expenditure level. The alternative method being discussed would be based on student achievement instead of the number of students.

Morrison said students across the state would take a test and a baseline score would be developed, which would become a mill levy reference. It would look in the amount of money schools are getting now but underachieving schools would get more money to help bring their performance up.

For example, he said if a school was going to be given \$100,000, they would have to raise one mill, or \$10,000 locally and the state would provide the other \$90,000.

"It makes local people more responsible and more in control of what they spend," Morrison said.



S. Clark



J. Morrison

Selling Colby is ongoing project for new organization

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Promoting Colby is the primary goal of a new organization, which for the most part is made up of retail businesses focusing on everything that is good in town.

The group, known simply as Colby Promotion, hopes to continue recruiting more businesses to join or at least come to a meeting and see if it might be of benefit to them.

Dave Jennings, one of organizers, said today that retail sales can be fickle and advertising any and all businesses is not just something that is done once a year around the holi-

days. "Retail is precarious and people don't change their buying habits only in November," he said.

Jennings added that as a business owner, it is important to keep people informed all the time about Colby.

Since the group's beginning in October of 2003, there have been many advertisements about Colby either in print, radio or television. For example, Jennings cited the television ads about Colby — Oasis on the Plains with focus on shopping here and highlighting the Colby College basketball teams and wrestling functions.

Another sample of how the group promotes the town can be seen on

page 4 of today's *Colby Free Press*.

"We want everyone to know that Colby has a lot of things going on," he said.

By combining forces using businesses and others, Jennings and other current members believe they can sustain a more broad campaign to positively promote Colby and thus bring even more trade to town.

Even the advertising ideas are chosen from a rotating committee that changes each quarter.

"By having different people serve on the quarterly advertising committee, the ideas will vary and add diversity to the campaign," he said.

The group usually meets the last Tuesday of the month at 7:30 a.m. in the basement of Sunflower Bank in Colby. There are about 100 business members in the group with about 30 to 40 representatives attending the monthly meetings.

"We encourage businesses to stop by and see if this is something they might want to be included in," Jennings said. "The only cost is \$30 a month to help pay for this continued ad campaign and suggestions are welcome."

At the meeting Tuesday, the group will hear from the second quarter committee on what ideas they are considering for the April,

May and June promotion of Colby.

"The \$30 a month is about the price of a cup of coffee or bottle of pop," he said, "but the impact when everyone gets together as opposed to working alone is huge!"

Jennings also cautioned that the group's advertising stays extremely general in its information and in no way replaces individual advertising outlets.

"We are looking at Colby from top to bottom," he said, "and the ads highlight businesses, schools, the medical community and everything."

For questions, call Jennings at 462-6361, or any other member.

Council approves treatment plant, sewer improvements

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council gave a thumbs up to contracting a Nebraska-based engineering firm to prepare the wastewater treatment plant and sewer main improvements during last week's meeting.

The improvements for both the treatment plant and sewer main are expected to be completed at the same time; however because of the expansion for Wal-Mart and the area south of I-70, the contract will have an option for beginning work on that section in the near future.

The Wal-Mart and I-70 phase of the project would mean letting out construction bids for the area under the interstate heading west.

The specific site for the sewer mains would take in Country Club Dr. (almost across from Davis), Franklin, and Range.

Also related to plans for the new Wal-Mart, the council approved authorizing Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, to look into acquiring the service territory from Midwest Energy — south of College and north of Willow from Range to Country Club Dr.

Armstrong told the council, after approving the acquisition, that she would get Midwest's proposal and have it reviewed by the city's association prior to accepting the terms.

The council also discussed regulations for sexually-oriented businesses. Armstrong said the planning commission has spent a lot of time on the issue with both Allan Taylor, county attorney, and Joel Kriss, city attorney, reviewing the draft zoning regulations.

"Neither Allan or Joel believed those regulations were appropriate," she said. Adding further that

their consensus was that a more detailed document would be necessary in order to allow the city regulatory power.

The commission, she said, met on Thursday, Feb. 12, with the county commissioners also present.

County input, she said, basically was that since Thomas County only has zoning within the three-mile jurisdiction of the city, they believed it was cost prohibitive to consider any regulations in county territory.

After that meeting, it was the planning commission's decision to

ask for more guidance from the council on whether it would be beneficial or a waste of effort to pursue regulations within the corporate limits.

Council members all agreed it would be better to keep working on this issue and have the commission come up with some kind of zoning requirements, possibly looking at light industrial areas.

The council also agreed it needed more information on the increase for telephone lines with respect to S & T and Southwestern Bell franchise fees.

Briefly

Program's cutoff date set

The cutoff date for the Natural Resources Conservation Service "Environmental Quality Incentives Program" is March 13. The program's purpose is to address natural resource concerns through the application of improved conservation systems. It is an environmental enhancement program and assists producers in meeting local, state and federal regulations. Agricultural producers interested in participating can apply at any time at their local Conservation Service Office or the United States Department of Agriculture Service Center. For information, call 462-7671.

Daffodil fund raising event begins

The Thomas County Chapter of the American Cancer Society is once again taking orders for daffodils as a fund raising event to benefit research and a cure. Bundles are 10 for

\$5 and orders can be placed by calling either Tina Dreiling, (785) 460-8677 or Stephanie Stones at (785) 462-8076. The deadline for ordering is Monday, March 1. The daffodils will then be delivered on Monday and Tuesday, March 8 and 9.

New play group forming

A play group is currently being formed for mothers and young toddler-age children to give them all a chance for interaction. Known as *Community Play Group* the moms and children will meet once a week, said Michelle Mettlen, one of the coordinators. The first meeting of the new group will be at 10 a.m., Friday, Feb. 27, at the Colby United Methodist Church nursery. For questions, call Mettlen at 460-3310.

Pre-kindergarten screening offered

The Colby school district, along with Northwest Educa-

tional Service Center staff will hold pre-kindergarten screening on March 9 and 10 at United Methodist Church in Colby. Appointments can be made by contacting school nurse Emily Strange at Colby Elementary School at 460-5111. Parents of students entering kindergarten in August are encouraged to take advantage of this developmental screening.

Commodity distribution planned

Commodity distribution will be from 4-5:30 p.m. Monday, March 1 at the RSVP office in the Senior Progress Center, 165 Fike Park in Colby. For more information, call 462-6744.

Voter registration open

Voter registration books are now open for anyone who has changed their name, address or who will turn 18 before the next statewide general election. Call (785) 462-4500 with questions.



Beware of fog

Colby, Oakley and Hoxie area

Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Areas of fog after midnight. Lows in the mid 20s. Northeast winds 5 to 15 mph.
Tuesday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 40s. Northeast winds 5 to 10 mph.
Tuesday night...Partly cloudy. Lows around 20. Southeast winds 5 to 10 mph.
Wednesday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 40s. South winds 5 to 15 mph.
Wednesday night through Friday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s. Lows in the 20s.

The numbers

Sunday's high, 57
Low this morning, 18
Records for Feb. 23, 78 in 1918 and -6 in 1914
Year ago today, 35 and 4
February 2004 precipitation, 0.27 inches
February 2004 snowfall, 6 inches
Precipitation past 24 hours, 0.00

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.

Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

