



COLBY FREE PRESS

Wal-Mart can have positive impact, speaker says

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Members of the Colby Promotion Committee got an idea of how the addition of a Wal-Mart supercenter can be a positive experience during a presentation Tuesday morning at City Limits Convention Center.

Catherine Shull, executive director of the Fort Morgan Area Chamber of Commerce in Fort Morgan, Colo. gave a presentation on the "Outside the Box" program her community instituted in 2001 after it found out Wal-Mart intended to build a store there.

"We went after those partners that had the resources and knowledge we needed," she said.

"We wanted to take a proactive stance." The chamber and its members, the city of Fort Morgan, Morgan Community College and Northeastern Colorado Association of Local Governments were all in on the effort to get ready for the store's impact. A senior living complex, bank and the *Fort Morgan Times* newspaper also got on board.

Shull said the goal was to encourage local businesses to be creative and identify their edge in the changing economy.

They had a year and a half to get ready for the store's impact and it opened Jan. 12, 2003.

She explained the program was for any business in Morgan County and had some-



Catherine Shull talked to the Colby Promotion Committee Tuesday morning at City Limits Convention Center.

thing for every type of business and entities that work with business.

Funding was through a Colorado First grant and Shull said they also needed a business partnership and a grocery store owner stepped up and helped raise \$90,000. Part of that amount was also raised through a \$25 fee businesses had to pay to be in the

"Find your niche, what you're good at. There's room for everyone."

Catherine Shull, executive director
Fort Morgan Area Chamber of Commerce

program. The money was used to fund the program and bring in speakers and do several business surveys.

The project was kicked off with a press conference and an introductory meeting which lead to the appearance of Barb Cole, a speaker who did a presentation and the later one-on-one consultations with individual businesses.

A retail gap analysis that identified where people were shopping and why, identify the trade area and bring to light new business opportunities.

Shull said the University of Colorado at Boulder business school did surveys and found that people were traveling to Greeley and Denver for automotive items and general merchandise.

"The more money spent, the bigger the tendency to go out of town," she said, adding people left Fort Morgan to shop because of more variety and selection and better prices and shopping hours.

Of the people going out of town to shop,

68 percent said they were going to Wal-Mart.

After the supercenter opened, the community started a "Think Local First" shopping campaign geared toward getting people to at least think about going to local stores first. "We kind of started a whisper campaign," Shull said, which included a series of seminars and workshops aimed at helping businesses improve service and performance.

The program has helped the community and the store's impact is being felt for the better.

City sales tax increased 20 percent but downtown fell to 14 percent but she said there were other factors than Wal-mart that contributed to that number, including the drought and Excel Beef, a major local employer, laid off nearly 2,000 workers.

"That did have a major factor in our shopping habits," she said.

The downtown business district has worked to improve its appearance with

moving the chamber to an old train depot and trying to make the area a historic district, which will also mean grant money.

In Jan. 2004, another analysis was done and sales tax downtown is up 6 percent over the year before and Shull said things are now settling down.

"That was the whole point of this exercise," she said. "Find your niche, what you're good at. There's room for everyone."

Shull said it wasn't an easy process and the future of some businesses is at stake, including the Fort Morgan K-Mart, which is on shaky ground. But she said since Wal-Mart came to town, two dollar stores, an Ace Hardware, Blockbuster Video and Burger King have opened up.

"All the horror stories we heard, we haven't experienced," Shull said.

She attributed it to the community being proactive, but said there were some merchants who had issues with the program.

Shull said the thought the chamber recruited Wal-mart but that wasn't the case.

"We don't recruit retail," she said, adding it comes in when a community is thriving and growing. "We're all the same. We're all there to better the community and make a living."

She said Colby has the same resources available that Fort Morgan did, including the people in the community and a college.

Driver charged in building crash

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Charges have been filed in an accident where a pickup was driven through an apartment wall at 460 N. Martin early Monday morning.

Gary Shull, of the Colby Police Department, said Andrew Michael Andrijeski, 21, of Colby, was charged Tuesday with three felony counts of criminal damage to property.

Shull said there was damage to the apartment, the pickup driven into the structure and the apartment contents.

He said the value of the damage is about \$9,600, including approximately \$4,000 to the structure and \$4,200 to the pickup owned by JM Tree of Colby.

Andrijeski stole the pickup while it was parked outside the apartment rented to Rowan Lee. He then backed it up and rammed it into the apartment. Andrijeski then left, leaving the pickup running while still lodged in the apartment.

The police department received the call at around 12:43 a.m. and Andrijeski was arrested several hours later.

Shull said they still don't have a concrete reason for the incident.

"We believe his intent was to commit theft but we're unable to prove that intent," he said.

Bob Coleman, the apartment owner, said the clean-up will take several days and it will be at least a week before Lee will be able to move back in.

Coleman said the apartment needs a new wall, door and window. Along with the structural damage, some of the furniture inside was damaged beyond repair including a couch, chair and table.

"He even took three blades off the ceiling fan," he said.

It's not the first time Coleman had such an accident with one of his apartments. Several years ago, he said, a resident hit the gas in his car instead of the brakes and hit a wall, slightly pushing it in.

Who let the dogs out?



Thomas County 4-H youth will be among many taking part in Saturday's Western Kansas Dog Show starting at 10 a.m. The event will be held at the 4-H Building on the Thomas County fairgrounds. The show offers 4-H youth and their dogs an opportunity to work on showmanship and obedience skills, said Carrie Bredemeier, dog project leader. In order to be prepared for the



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Saturday event, many 4-Hers were busy practicing with their animals on Tuesday night. **LEFT:** Colton Rundel worked with his dog, Jack, a border collie, by having him sit for a specific length of time. **RIGHT:** Jayden Bixenman and his collie, Bridgett, waited patiently for the next set of instructions from Bredemeier, who was conducting the practice session.

Colby College coach finalist for Minnesota post

By TOM (TD) DREILING

Free Press Publisher

Brian Ostermann, Colby Community College men's head basketball coach, will be in Minnesota Thursday to interview for the head coaching job at Bemidji State University.

The university's Rick Goeb, director of athletics, said Ostermann and Patrick Smith, head coach and athletic director at Moberly Area Community College in Missouri, are the finalists for the Bemidji State post.

Goeb said Ostermann will be on campus on Thursday and Smith on

Friday. Ostermann, in a note to

friends and supporters late Tuesday said, "I am very happy here at Colby and the people here are great." But he said he is going to take a "very close look at this opportunity (at Bemidji State)."

He said Bemidji is an NCAA Division II school, and also said that "my home state is Minnesota so

certainly there are some things that make the position intriguing."

Ostermann said he has a "very good recruiting class coming in (here at Colby College)," and added that they (the college) have done some things to make this a better job and situation for our program, me and my family."

Bemidji State's Web site gave the following information on both coaches:

Ostermann — For the past five years (1999-present), Ostermann has been the head men's basketball coach at Colby, compiling a 90-66 overall record, including 50-14 the

last two seasons. In 2002-03 he was the Jayhawk West Conference Coach of the Year as he recorded the best season in 20 years with a 26-7 mark. Ostermann has led his club to a Region VI Final Four appearance and No. 2 ranking.

He also made stops as an assistant at NCAA Division I, the University of Missouri-Kansas City (1996-99), NCAA Division II, Missouri Western State College (1992-96) and Mercyhurst College (1991-92).

Smith — As the head men's basketball coach and athletic director at Moberly since 2001, Smith engineered his program to No. 13 in the

final 2003-04 National Junior College Association of America (NJCAA) national poll and a fifth-place finish in the NJCAA National Tournament in 2001-02.

His credentials include head coach and athletic director at Jacksonville (Community) College (1995-97, 1998-2001), assistant men's coach at Division I, University of Miami of Florida (1997-98) and five more junior colleges ranging from Kansas, Illinois and Kentucky.

Overall, Smith has 20 years of coaching experience averaging 22 wins per season since 1991-92.



Turn to cooler

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie area

Tonight...Partly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of thunderstorms after midnight. Breezy. Lows in the upper 40s. South winds 15 to 25 mph shifting to the west after midnight. Gusts up to 40 mph. **Thursday...**Mostly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of showers in the afternoon. Windy. Highs in the lower 50s. North winds 20 to 30 mph with gusts to around 45 mph. **Thursday night...**Mostly cloudy with a 40 percent chance of rain showers. Lows in the mid 30s. North winds around 15 mph and gusty. **Friday...**Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of rain. Highs in the lower 50s. North winds 10 to 20 mph. The **extended forecast** calls for a return to warmer temperatures by Sunday with highs Sunday and Monday in the upper 70s to 80s.

The numbers

Tuesday's high, 85; Low this morning, 44; Records for April 28, 97 in 1910 and 23 in 1965; Year ago today, 68 and 49; Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00

April total, 2.60; April snowfall, 3 inches; Soil temperature, 59

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

Barbershop performance

The Tumbleweed Chorus will present, "Songs Like Daddy Used to Sing," at 3 and 7:30 p.m. on Saturday at the Frahm Theatre in the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College. Yesterday's Heroes, Tone-Henge and the Tumbleweed Chorus will perform. For information or tickets, call 462-6552 or 460-8640.

College endowment meeting set

The Colby Community College Endowment Association's annual meeting will be held Monday, May 10, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The meeting, which is open to the public, will be held in the Fireside Lounge in the Robert Burnett Memorial Student Union. Contact Nick Wells at 462-4684 for additional information.

Drunk driving event at Colby High

The Colby High School, S.O.S., Students Against Destructive Decisions Chapter, Kansas National Guard and Regional Prevention Center will be sponsoring a "Don't Drink and



Ostermann

Drive" event on Thursday and Friday in the high school parking lot from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Students will be able to try driving a golf cart while wearing Fatal Vision goggles to experience how difficult and dangerous driving under the influence of alcohol can be. The event is to promote making good choices while at Prom 2004 in May.

National Day of Prayer

The 53rd annual National Day of Prayer will start at 12:10 p.m. Thursday, May 6. The event will be held at the Thomas County Courthouse.

Tree plantings this week

The Colby Tree Board will have a tree planting ceremony at 10 a.m. Friday at Fike Park in observance of National Arbor Day.

Fund raising dance planned

A fund raising dance will be held from 8 to 11:30 p.m., Friday, at Comfort Inn Convention Center to help defray travel expenses for Lisa Jones, Miss Rodeo Kansas Princess,

Colby. Featured at the dance will be disc jockey Bobby Wild and admission is \$7. Jones said she as a representative of the county, she plans to make appearances throughout the state, along with attending the rodeo in Calgary, Canada and the Wrangler National Final Rodeo in Las Vegas, Nev. Proceeds will assist Jones with expenses.

Honor choir to perform

The Colby Grade School Honor Choir's "Soaring Singers" will present a year-end concert at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 4 in the grade school auditorium. Everyone is invited to attend and there is no charge for admission. For questions, call 460-5100.

School vaccinations required

Emily Strange, school nurse for the Colby School District, said the state will require chickenpox and Hepatitis B vaccinations for school entrance. If a child has chickenpox, the vaccine isn't required. Written documentation from a doctor or parent, with the date of illness, needs to be provided to the school. For information, contact Strange at 460-5111.

