



COLBY FREE PRESS

'Busy Babies' day



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Laurie Turner, left, showed her daughter Madeline blocks while Justice Barrett, the daughter of Justin and Amber Barrett, played today at Pioneer Memorial Library. Several mothers and a nanny got together this morning as part of Busy Babies group, which

provides an opportunity for parents to get together and socialize while their children play. It was the group's first meeting and they're hoping to grow. For information, please call the library at 460-0802.

Busy beginning Commission has new look

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

New faces took their places at the table of the Thomas County Commission Monday morning at the courthouse.

Ken Christiansen and Paul Steele took their seats as outgoing commissioners Glen Kersenbrock and Duane Dawes looked on.

The first item of business was approval of the last payment for Dirks Earthmoving of Scott City in the amount of \$84,462.75.

Commissioner Ron Evans said the payment was for work on the borrow excavation project at the county landfill.

The reclamation project was to restore land the county used to get cover dirt for the landfill.

Dirt was removed from land near the landfill and used to restore a field owned by O.D. Calhoun to farmable condition. He had a contract with the county to let them take dirt from his land.

Another payment up was Kanas County Association Multiline Pool dues. The commissioners approved the \$76,176 payment.

Evans was re-appointed chairman of the commission and other appointees for 2005 are: Juanita Dewey, county health nurse; Kathi Wright, emergency medical services/911 director; Dr. Victor Hildyard, emergency medical services medical advisor; Ken Ptacek,

noxious weed and prairie dog control; Bob McLemore, local environmental protection chairman; Clair Schrock, road supervisor; Dr. Gary Slavens, county health officer; John Lygeros, emergency preparedness director; Sandy Swob, household and hazardous waste director; J.L. Ellis, radiological officer; and Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor.

The 2005 holidays are: President's Day Feb. 21; Memorial Day May 30; July 4; Labor Day Sept. 5; Veterans Day Nov. 11; Thanksgiving Nov. 24 and Nov. 25; Christmas, Dec. 26 and 27 and New Year's, Jan. 2, 2006.

The commissioners also appointed the 2005 fair board members. They are: Marty Crampton, Stan Strange, Bill Shields, Gary Garrett, Kathi Wright, Mark Bredemeier, Bruce Plumisto, Elizabeth Strand, Brad Skolout, Mark Anderson, Cynthia Bieberle, Darrell Dible, Nancy Rundel, Mark Miller and Justin Alexander.

They designation of the *Colby Free Press* as their official newspaper.

Approved a resolution making the following banks as depositories for the county for the new year: Sunflower Bank, Farmers and Merchants Bank, First National Bank, Peoples State Bank and The Bank, all located in Colby and Farmers Bank and Trust, which is located at Brewster.

Information at meeting brings questionable looks

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Thomas County residents found out Monday how well the county is doing when stacked against the rest of the state, along with how to make the area stronger economically.

The town hall meeting at the Thomas County Office Complex revealed some of the reasons why Thomas County and Colby don't rank higher on the state's prosperity list. The meeting was the result of the work focus groups and the Pro-Active Committee, a joint effort between the Colby Promotion Committee and the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. David Darling, a K-State Research and Extension agricultural economist and rural community specialist, talked about why the county isn't ranked higher.

Darling said Thomas County is ranked 23rd out of the state's 105 counties and that only three western Kansas counties were ranked in the top 20 percent in the state. Ellis County is ranked second, Sherman County eighth and Scott County 15th.

He also answered questions about the subject.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong wanted to know why Sherman was ranked higher than Thomas County when it has fewer people.

Darling said Sherman County ranks higher because more people are employed in retail.

Though Thomas County was ranked lower, he said it has a very small gap between private and public sector wages while Sherman County has more disparity between the two.

He said growing private sector wages is the way to help build an economy and when that happens, public sector wages follow.

At the basic level, Darling explained, in order for an area to be economically viable, he said there needs to be a population to serve, they need buying power and a place to spend their money and there also needs to be a job and trade center.

He gave five examples of larger cities and asked people to identify the city that serves the most people. Of Hutchinson, Hays, Salina and Emporia, Salina was at the top. That community serves a large area, much like Colby is a hub for nine counties, he said.

Having too much infrastructure is another problem. He said an example is Washington County, which has only a few thousand people but has several townships and school districts, explaining there aren't enough people to serve on all the boards and commissions. It also takes a lot of money to maintain it all. Darling said too many townships are wasteful.

Thomas County Commissioner Ron Evans and former commissioner Glen Kersenbrock disagreed, saying townships are the last bastion of democracy.

Library has the details Space-related trip awaits Colby youngsters

From Staff Reports

As part of a new program offering at Pioneer Memorial Library, middle school-aged students will have a chance to take a trip to Colorado Springs to explore space-related exhibits, said Judy Kleinsorge, children's librarian.

The day-long trip has been planned for Feb. 26 and will include stops at the East Branch Library, the United States Air Force Academy and the Air and Space Museum at Peterson Air Force Base.

The East Branch Library is hosting a special traveling exhibit entitled "NASA @ your library" and features a plasma-screen theater, a stand with iMac computers which run interactive multimedia presentations and programming on how the space program contributes to health care, agriculture and more, she said.

Interested Thomas County students in grades 6-8 will be required to complete a form, which includes a typewritten description of how the

space program benefits our everyday lives and turn the form into the library, Kleinsorge said.

Thirty-five students will be selected to participate with preference given to those who complete the forms and turn them in by 8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 24. Forms are being distributed through the area schools or can be obtained at the front desk at the library.

This activity is part of a new program, "Library in Motion" offered by Pioneer Memorial Library

which is geared toward the middle school student. The purpose of this program is to take the young motivated learner beyond bound and Internet resources to a tangible dimension where they can further their knowledge through new experiences, Kleinsorge said.

This trip is made possible through the sponsorship of the City of Colby Special Law Enforcement Fund.

Contact Kleinsorge at 462-4470 or stop in at 375 W. Fourth for more information

More winter wheat planted

WICHITA (AP) — The nation's farmers planted fewer acres of winter wheat for the 2005 harvest than last season, although Kansas growers boosted their acreage of the crop, the National Agricultural Statistics Service said Wednesday.

The agency's plantings report offers the first glimpse of the potential size of this year's crop. Winter wheat is seeded in the fall.

Winter wheat planted for 2005 is expected to total 41.6 million acres nationwide, down 4 percent from last year.

By far, most of those acres were in Kansas, the nation's leading

wheat producer, where farmers planted 10.1 million acres of wheat.

"It's important — when you are talking about an investment of 10 million acres in Kansas," said David Frey, administrator of the Kansas Wheat Commission.

Wheat acreage has remained flat in the last several years.

The state's 2005 wheat acreage is up 1 percent — about 100,000 acres — from a year ago. It is below the 10.5 million acres planted in 2003.

"The acreage is up ever so slightly over last year, but I think a lot more of it will be harvested this year," Frey said.

Briefly

Wellness Fair Saturday

The 20th annual Thomas County Wellness Fair is on target to open at 9 a.m. on Saturday at the Student Union on the campus of Colby Community College. Door prizes, a speaker, a variety of booths and pre-wellness fair test results will be available. The fair will wrap up at 1 p.m.

Amusement Association to meet

The Thomas County Amusement Association will meet on Monday at 7 p.m. in the Thomas County Office Complex. Those attending are asked to bring new ideas for the 2005 Thomas County Fair.

Wheelchairs, more available at VFW

Officials with the Colby VFW are reminding anyone who needs to borrow medical equipment that some items can be found at the VFW, 220 N. Lake Ave. Dale Deaver, one of the VFW members in charge of the equipment, said borrowing medical equipment is free and available to anyone in need of these items for as long as necessary. Some items avail-

able include crutches, wheelchairs, and other medical equipment. For those needing equipment or have donations, can call Deaver at (785) 443-1113.

Colby's community sign changes hands

The Kiwanis Club of Thomas County recently assumed responsibility for the community sign located on the northwest corner of Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue in downtown Colby. For pricing information, usage guidelines and reservation requests, persons are asked to call (785) 460-5060, said Phil DeYoung, one of the coordinators. Reservation requests can also be submitted via e-mail to: communitysign@mail.com

Heartland School plans fund raiser

Heartland Christian School will have its annual barbecue from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday. The meal will include pit barbecue, rolls, corn, salad, dessert bar and baked potato and is a free-will offering.

For questions, call 460-6419.

Colby Atwood Grinnell



It'll be on the brrrr side

Friday...Mostly cloudy. Colder. Highs around 18. East winds 5 to 10 mph.

Friday night...Partly cloudy in the evening then becoming mostly cloudy. Lows around 5. Northeast winds 5 to 10 mph.

Saturday...Mostly cloudy. Highs around 16. Northeast winds 5 to 10 mph.

Saturday night...Mostly cloudy. Lows around 8.

Sunday...Mostly cloudy. Highs around 18.

Monday, Martin Luther King Jr Day...Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid 20s.

The numbers

Wednesday's high, 32
Low this morning, 16
Year ago today, 58 and 18
Records for this date, 70 in 1928 and -20 in 1905
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
January total, 0.16
January snowfall, 2.8 inches
Soil temperature, 32

The sources:

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. Recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

