



COLBY FREE PRESS

Paving the way



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Work began last week to repave Willow and Franklin. City of Colby director of public works and utilities Marc Gillman said the project should be done sometime in August. The project is being done by Sporer Development of Oakley.

Prosecutor drops charge

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The attempted second-degree murder charge against a Colby woman alleged to have abused and battered her 23-month old daughter has been dropped, said Andrea Wyrick, Thomas County Attorney Wednesday.

The amended complaint on Amanda Faye Harris, 19, is minus the murder charge; however, the aggravated battery and child abuse charges will stand and be heard at the plea hearing Wednesday, June 1, she said.

Wyrick said the attempted murder charges were dropped when a witness came forward with new facts.

"Facts from the eyewitness didn't support the intent needed for an attempted murder charge," Wyrick said.

In the original police report, Harris was charged with attempted murder, child abuse and battery stemming from an incident in mid-February that resulted in her daughter being airlifted to a Denver hospital.

The injuries were considered life-

threatening, said Gary Shull, police investigator.

At that time, Shull said police believed Harris was alleged to have intentionally injured her daughter's head on either an air conditioner or air humidifier unit.

While police suspected the reason for the child's head injury, they were unsure as to the cause of the child's other injuries to her arms, legs, buttocks, chest and shoulders.

Harris was later arrested in the latter part of February after authorities with the Protection Report Center, an after-hours center for the Kansas Social Rehabilitation Service, found sufficient reason to suspect abuse.

Following her arrest at that time, Shull said, Harris was released on a \$300,000 signature bond on Feb. 28.

When Harris returns to the Thomas County Court on the first of June to face the amended complaint, she is expected to enter a plea of either guilty or not guilty to the charges of battery and abuse.

Harris' two children, are currently living with a foster family in western Kansas.

Hoxie Seabea making a difference in war against terror

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A former Hoxie man is fighting the war against terror one building block at a time on the continent of Africa.



Lt. Koster

Lt. Chad Koster, a Navy Seabee, is currently on a six-month deployment in the Horn of Africa.

"My detail from the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion One is deployed in direct support of the Combined Joint Task Force — Horn of Africa.

The mission is to deter terrorist activity and curtail the spread of extremist ideology throughout the region," said Lt. Chad Koster during a recent telephone interview.

Koster, a 1992 graduate of Hoxie High School attended Colby Community College from 1992 to 1994. At the college he earned an associate degree in pre-engineering. He graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in civil engineering in 1997.

After college, Koster joined the United States Navy and is currently holding the rank of lieutenant.

Overseeing 48 Seabees, Koster's work in Africa is allowing him a new appreciation for home.

"We deployed in February to Rota Spain and arrived in Djibouti in March. It's been a great experience.

"It definitely makes you appreciate home and everything we have back there," he said.

Besides the battalion in Africa, the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion One has detachments in Haiti; Cuba; Sigonella, Sicily; Souda Bay, Crete; Morocco and Iraq.

Koster said his battalion is responsible for building schools, health clinics, hospitals and community related services such as bridges.

He said while he's not overseen the construction of any bridges, his predecessors did and the structures make movement throughout the area possible.

Koster's work takes place in the countries of Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Yemen and Seychelles.

"The primary purpose for my (detachment) is to execute various construction projects (repair schools, clinics, water well facilities) within key areas of the region.

So far we have worked in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya.



Two Navy Seabees mix concrete for a project in Africa. They are under the supervision of former Hoxie resident, Lt. Chad Koster, on deployment in the Horn of Africa where their battalion is building not only structures, but global relations and thwarting terrorism in the region.

"By having an active American presence in the area, we hope to show the local population that we are good people and (we) deprive terrorists of an environment where their extremist ideologies can take hold," Koster said.

The task of helping the people in Africa and completing the mission are not always easy for Koster and his fellow Seabees.

"The most challenging aspect of the deployment has been coordinating all of the logistics required to get our teams downrange with all of their gear, tools, and equipment and building materials.

"Quality construction materials are often very difficult to find, but our guys always find a way to get the job done," he said.

Koster said most of the local population is glad the Seabees are helping them out, while others "wish we'd go away."

Despite hardships, Koster said

the experience has been "very rewarding."

"Knowing that you are greatly improving the lives of the local population, particularly the kids, is very gratifying. It is also good to know that we can help fight terrorism before it gets a change to take hold in this region," Koster said.

Koster wished his family and friends in the United States a very happy and safe Memorial Weekend holiday.

His immediate family includes his wife, Lori, and their four children, Alex, 10, Brayden, 9, Noah, 6, and Reagan, 3, all living in Biloxi, Miss.

Other members of Koster's family residing the area include his parents, Harold and Bridget Koster, his grandmother, Lois (Koster) Davis, and his parents-in-law, Larry and Susan Bieker, all of Hoxie.

Koster said having the support he and other military men and women have from family and friends is very important.

"I would like to thank everyone back home for all of the support that you provide for all of the troops deployed overseas.

"It is phenomenal and greatly appreciated. After being over here, you truly realize what a great country we live in," he said.

Student inducted in society

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The Thomas County Learning Center held a special event to honor one of its students inducted into the National Adult Education Honor Society.

Elizabeth Williams, Colby, was chosen by the staff at the center for her dedication to her education, said Melinda Fikan, site director.

"Membership standards for this honor society," Fikan said, "include regular attendance, working well with faculty and other students and taking responsibility for their own education."

In addition to honoring Williams, Fikan said there were other students recognized throughout the year as students of the month.

"These students were chosen



Elizabeth Williams, student at the Thomas County Learning Center, was recently recognized for her achievements by being inducted into the National Adult Education Honor Society.

for their motivation, dedication, desire, ambition, discipline and regular attendance," she said.

The learning center offers an alternative for those wanting to finish their education or in taking specific

courses. For information or general questions about the center, call Fikan at (785) 465-7900.

Memorial Day event planned in Colby

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Services honoring those who have paid the ultimate price for their country will be held at 10 a.m. on Monday in observance of Memorial Day at Beulah Cemetery in Colby.

The public will be seated and that will be followed by the parade of veterans to the memorial stand.

The posting of national colors will be done by the Colby Honor Guard.

Opening remarks will be made by American Legion Commander Jim Griffin.

Opening prayer will be done by Sixth District American Legion

Commander Jim Vap.

The American Legion Post 363 Auxiliary will present a wreath which will be followed by the reading of the names of deceased Veterans of Foreign Wars and auxiliary members and the names of American Legion and auxiliary members.

There will be a guest speaker and closing prayer, followed by a 21-gun salute.

Taps and the raising of the flags will close out the ceremony.

The event will be followed by an open house at the Colby Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6882.

Coffee, tea and rolls will be served.

Musical Menu Awaits Fike Park Visitors

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