



Fun in the sun



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Playing ball at Fike Park was how Tad Holmes, Benjamin Baird and Ryan Scott spent their time this morning. A group of children from Brewster was at the park before heading to swim lessons at the Colby Swimming Pool.

Colby Council has light agenda Tuesday

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council will hold its regular meeting at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in council chambers to review aspects of a new handbook received by the League of Kansas Municipalities.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said the council's attorney, Dave Starkey, will explain what he believes are the more important parts of this new material and essential to council members.

The council is expected to approve a sewer line road crossing agreement with the Thomas County commissioners. The document, Armstrong said, provides permis-

sion to place the new sewer main under the road at various intersections.

Work on the sewer project and updates are also expected at Tuesday's meeting.

During its last meeting, the council approved the Thomas County Fair parade route for Saturday, Aug. 6. The route begins at Fike Park, then south on Franklin to Cedar Street, then west on Cedar to Range Avenue and fairgrounds.

The council also approved a request from Woofert Pump and Well to extend its project with the city until July 5 at which point if the work isn't completed, a penalty of \$500 a day would be assessed.

The council agreed to allow the extension; however, in the event the company hasn't completed the project by July 5, there would be no more extensions given and the penalty would go in effect on that date.

A contract amendment for the Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Team was also approved recently.

This contract will allow the city to access additional money in the event the team goes out for emergencies involving hazardous materials.

The council meeting is open to the public. For those wanting an agenda, call the city office, 460-4410.

Kick off meeting Monday

'Relay for Life' needs help

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

An organizational meeting for this year's "Relay for Life" will be held at 6 p.m., Monday, at Gambino's and is open to anyone interested in learning more about how they can help.

Thomas County "Relay for Life" is a community event honoring cancer survivors, those who have been diagnosed with cancer and caregivers, said Carla Sharp, this year's chairperson. The event also

pays tribute to those who have lost their battle with cancer as well.

Similar to year's past, there will be a survivor walk, luminaries and teams walking the track during the 24-hour event.

Volunteers will be needed for many aspects of the event and organizations, businesses, church groups or others can get involved by forming teams.

All proceeds will benefit the American Cancer Society.

This year's event is planned for

Friday, Aug. 19 at Dennen Field and activities will include a barbecue, dance, and more, Sharp said.

Those who can attend the Monday kickoff and buffet at Gambino's are asked to RSVP to Sharp at (785) 460-4881 prior to the event.

"This is a great opportunity for all Thomas County residents to come together," she said.

For more information about the American Cancer Society, call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit their website at: <http://www.cancer.org>

County's health department makes improvements, upgrades

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Patrons of the Thomas County Health Department are not entering a new place — it just seems that way.

The department has been brought up to speed over the past year, said administrator Juanita Dewey, and has a whole new look to go with it.

The first and most obvious change is the waiting room and receptionist's desk.

They have switched sides and the waiting room, now smaller, is on the right side of entrance.

"It's more homey now," Dewey said, adding there's also a children's room attached.

Another reason for the front office renovation was to insure patient privacy. She said the old office setting didn't allow for adequate space for secure record keeping or office equipment.

Dewey said they could better utilize the space up front with the switch and enlarging the amount of space used for the office.

She said it's worked much better and also improved the appearance of the department.

New cabinets were also put in place for record storage. Each is a stand-alone wood cabinet which is locked every night.

There's also now a lactation room, which was done by repainting an old room and putting in new

furniture.

"We've done quite a bit," she said.

The lactation room is used to teach new mothers breastfeeding and also a quiet place for them to go after appointments to feed their babies.

A new lab room was added late last year, along with the new lab services now offered at the department.

Dewey said it was a necessity so the nurses can draw blood for tests requested by local physicians.

Also, she said each of the department's employees now has their own computer and they're all networked together, which has also helped.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Remodeling at the Thomas County Health Department has changed the appearance of the front office and waiting area. Karla Haggard, who works in the front office, has more room since the work was completed.

Street work



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Ignacio Ramirez and Justin Stramel with Sporer Land Development Inc. of Oakley worked on guttering along Willow Avenue this week in Colby. Road work is being done on Willow and South Franklin in preparation for the construction of the Wal-Mart Supercenter later this year.

Controversial judge awarded high honor

TOPEKA (AP) — A Shawnee County district judge who said the state needed to dramatically increase its spending on education and ordered schools to remain closed until legislators complied has been honored by the Kansas Bar Association.

The association gave Judge Terry Bullock its Courageous Attorney Award, created in 2000 to honor

attorneys who display "exceptional courage in the face of adversity, thus bringing credit to the legal profession."

Bullock presided over the trial of a lawsuit filed in 1999 by parents and administrators in the Dodge City and Salina school districts, claiming that the state spent too little on its schools, then distributed the money unfairly.

In a December 2003 order, Bullock agreed and said legislators must provide more money to meet a duty of the Kansas Constitution to provide a suitable education to every child. Bullock didn't set a figure but said the increase could be \$1 billion annually, based on a study commissioned by lawmakers.

When legislators ended their 2004 session without passing a

plan, Bullock ordered the state not to spend a penny on its schools until lawmakers fixed the state's school finance system. The Kansas Supreme Court blocked that order when it began reviewing the lawsuit. Many legislators, particularly Republicans, have criticized Bullock and his ruling, though some declined to say anything about his award.

U.S. launches major combat operation in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — The U.S. military launched a major combat operation today with 1,000 Marines and Iraqi soldiers in the hunt for insurgents and foreign fighters in a volatile western province straddling Syria.

Operation Spear started in the pre-dawn hours in Anbar province to hunt for insurgents and foreign fighters, the military said.

The area, which straddles the Syrian border, is where U.S. forces said it killed about 40 militants in airstrikes in Karabilah on June 11.

The operation came one day after Air Force Brig. Gen. Don Alston called the Syrian border the "worst problem" in terms of stemming the influx of foreign fighters to Iraq. Syria is under intense pressure from Washington and Baghdad to tighten control of its porous 380-mile border with Iraq.

The Marines have lost 11 men and two sailors in the past week in separate incidents around Anbar.

In Baghdad, a suicide car bomber slammed into a loaded fuel tanker as it drove through Baghdad's eastern suburbs Friday, killing two people and injuring another six, police said.

The car hit the tanker after it missed an Iraqi army patrol in the Kamaliyah suburb.

A suicide car bomber rammed into an Iraqi army convoy in northern Iraq early Friday, injuring at least seven people, police Brig. Gen. Sarhat Qadir said.

The blast came on the heels of a suicide car bomb on Baghdad's airport road Thursday that killed at least eight police officers and wounded 25 more.

On June 11, the Marines had engaged the insurgents after the mili-

tants took control of a road just outside Karabilah near the Iraqi-Syrian frontier city of Qaim, about 200 miles west of Baghdad.

The battle was also where insurgents had killed 21 people, beheading three of them. Those bodies, found June 10, were believed to belong to a group of missing Iraqi soldiers.

During the airstrikes, Marine aircraft fired seven precision-guided missiles at insurgents armed with AK-47 assault rifles, medium machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. No U.S. troops or civilians were injured.

On Thursday, Alston blamed Iraq's recent spike in bloodshed on Jordanian-born terrorist leader Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi, who purportedly condoned the killing of fellow Muslims and denounced the country's majority Shiites as col-

laborators with the Americans.

Alston took aim at al-Zarqawi, saying the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq is most responsible for the nearly 1,100 violent deaths since the Shiite-led government took office seven weeks ago.

Al-Zarqawi's hope to provoke a sectarian war suffered a setback Thursday when the Shiite-led parliament and leaders of the disfavored Sunni Arab minority, which is thought to provide the backbone of the insurgency, agreed on a process for drafting Iraq's constitution.

Alston's focus on al-Zarqawi, whose small group is blamed for many of the bloodiest attacks and hostage-takings in Iraq, apparently was aimed at reinforcing growing dissatisfaction among Iraqis over insurgents targeting civilians. He said that anger has brought an increase in calls to tip lines.

