



12 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

Friday

July 1, 2005

50¢

Volume 116, Number 104  
Serving Thomas County since 1888

## Ready to celebrate



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Damien Stephens of Colby put out more fireworks at his stand near Dillons this morning. Stephens was restocking after a busy evening Thursday night. He said there was a steady stream of

buyers, including one man who bought more than \$400 worth of fireworks. Stephens said he expected to get even busier over the rest of the weekend the Fourth of July itself.

## Governor arrives here on Tuesday

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius will be in town on Tuesday giving Colbyites many opportunities throughout the day to visit with her.

"This is a wonderful chance to showcase what we have in Colby," said Mayor Warren Hixson earlier today.

The governor's first stop will be Kid's Port, 460 N. Garfield, where she will interact with children at the facility.

From there, Sebelius will go to Colby Community College at 11:30 a.m. to speak with one of the classes.

At noon, everyone is invited to attend a public luncheon in the Colby College student union and at 1:15 p.m., the governor will visit Citizens Medical Center.

Many children and their families might want to stop by Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th St., at 1:45 p.m. and starting at 2 p.m., the

governor is scheduled to read a story to young people.

"This is a rare opportunity," said Jeff Friesen, librarian, who is encouraging anyone able to attend the event attend.

The final stop on the governor's visit will be at the Colby Visitor's Center, located on South Range on the northside of Interstate 70.

"We feel honored that she (Gov. Sebelius) has chosen the Visitor Center as one of her stops to meet and great people here," said Leilani Thomas, director of the Colby Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

Hixson said the governor's trip is part of her Rural Tour 2005, which will begin earlier on Tuesday with stops in Atwood and Oberlin on U.S. Highway 36.



K. Sebelius

## Colbyites to perform

The McLemore Family will be performing live, Saturday, from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. on High Plains Public Radio's "Western Swing and Other Things."

For those wanting to hear the broadcast, the High Plains Public

Radio (KANZ) can be found at 89.5 on FM. The host of the show, Marshal Allen Bailey, will be a performer and emcee at this year's Pickin' On The Plains, said Susan McLemore, singer and co-coordinator of the festival.

## 'New' family and consumer sciences extension agent hired

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Thomas County's "new" family and consumer sciences extension agent might be familiar to many people. Diann Gerstner just started in the position on June 20 but it's not the first time she's held the job.

"I've already had this position once so I'm back again," she said.

She was the county's home economics agent from June, 1981 to August, 1988. After the birth of her first child, she spent the next 13 years dedicated to that part of her life.

That was followed by teaching home ec at Colby High School for three years and one year on the Colby Community College switchboard before deciding to return to extension.

Being away 17 years has brought a few changes, but much has stayed the same.

Gerstner said during the first time around, there was not a 4-H agent like there is now and they didn't have a county vehicle.

The office location also changed. She said when she first joined extension, the offices were in the Thomas County Courthouse, then where Dr. Karen Thummel's offices are now, before finally moving to the west end of the Thomas Office County Office Complex, it's current location.

She said the mission of extension hasn't

changed at all, but the way information is delivered has.

Twenty years ago, Gerstner said there would be a meeting on a topic. Now, because people are busier, she said it's harder for people to find time to attend one more thing so she's looking at different ways to get information to people.

She said one way might be to get involved in events already going on or to use the Internet or the newspaper to get the word out. The Internet, she said, would be ideal, because people can access it any time they want.

The title of the position is different also. In the beginning, she was the Thomas County extension home economist. Now she's the county's family and consumer sciences agent.



D. Gerstner

## Harvest slowing in county

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Wheat harvest in Thomas County was in full swing earlier this week but it's starting to wind down. Roger Hale, manager of the Colby Wheat Office, said harvest is over by Sunday or Monday.

He said he's still keeping busy, however, as crews get ready to move out of the area as they finish up and others move in and move on.

"This are picking up quite a bit," Hale said, adding he's sending many crews on and referring them northwest of Colby in Kansas or onto Nebraska and Fort Morgan, Colo.

That was a change from earlier in the week when he had cutters but now wheat to cut.

He said last year was "bad" with no wheat to cut and Hale figured he would be doing more business this year.

"I would guess they're finding their own cutters," he said.

As far as yields go, he's heard



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

This combine was cutting south of Colby recently, but many farmers are reporting the harvest is beginning to slow down in Thomas County and outlying areas.

"big and small yields," with some being high to nothing at all.

Hale has heard some go as high as 90 bushels an acre on one farmer's field to a more modest yet still good 67 bushels per acre. More in the middle was an average of about 45 bushels he's heard from many farmers.

"That's not bad at all," he said.

He's also heard some farmers have had to write off their fields as losses because there's nothing to harvest, and some with yields as low as 10 bushels an acre.

Numbers at area elevators also show harvest is winding down. On Thursday, the number of bushels taken in were down significantly

from what they were earlier in the week.

Hoxie took in 65,000 bushels; Rexford, 95,000; and Mingo, 80,000.

On Monday, Hale said, many elevators in the area had their biggest days of the harvest. Reports had Hoxie, Mingo and Rexford taking in the most wheat so far this year.

Mingo took in 188,753; Rexford had 144,000 and Hoxie took in 150,000 bushels. Colby also had a big day on Monday, with more than 150,000 and Atwood took in 100,000 bushels. Selden/Dresden took in 70,000 bushels and Menlo, 42,000.

## Commissioners hear budget request

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Signs it's nearly time to start work on the budget for the next year were evident at Thursday's end-of-month Thomas County commissioners meeting. The commissioners heard a budget request from the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council.

Board members Joanne Vaughn and Pat Willoughby were on hand, along with Daniel Crotinger, a staff member, to present the annual report and make their request.

Crotinger said they were asking for \$30,000 this year.

Chairman Ron Evans said the commissioners would make every effort to give them this year the same amount the organization re-

ceived last year — \$28,349.

He said they have a good board and provide a valuable service.

Crotinger said last year, they served 250 Thomas County residents and 405 people in the nine northwest Kansas counties they cover.

Emergency Medical Services director Kathi Wright was also at the meeting to discuss her department's credit cards.

At a recent meeting, the commissioners decided all departments should turn in their credit cards to County Clerk Shelly Harms and check out cards when needed.

Evans told Wright he understands the ambulance needs credit cards for fuel and her department is the

exception to the rest.

Renewing employee health insurance was also on the agenda.

Randy Dick with Central Benefits gave a presentation to the commissioners and said the employee insurance committee asked for one change to the plan.

He said they asked to look into switching over to a PPO plan because they aren't seeing the need to send people out of state. On the bottom line, it would cut insurance costs up to \$70,000 percent for the next year, dropping the price of insurance for the county from \$325,000 to \$255,000. The committee was going to look at the plan and make a recommendation to the commissioners at a later date.

## High court's first woman resigns

WASHINGTON (AP)—Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman on the Supreme Court and a swing vote on abortion as well as other contentious issues, announced her retirement Friday. A bruising Senate confirmation struggle loomed as President Bush pledged to name a successor quickly.

"It has been a great privilege indeed to have served as a member of the court for 24 terms," the 75-year-old justice wrote Bush in a one-paragraph resignation letter. "I will

leave it with enormous respect for the integrity of the court and its role under our constitutional structure."

Little more than an hour later, Bush praised O'Connor as "a discerning and conscientious judge and a public servant of complete integrity." O'Connor's announcement marked the first retirement in 11 years on an aging court. It came as a modest surprise, particularly since Chief Justice William Rehnquist has been the subject of retirement rumors for months.

Rehnquist, 80 and ailing with thyroid cancer, has offered no hint as to his future plans.

O'Connor's decision capped a pioneer's career. President Reagan broke nearly 200 years of tradition when he tapped her for the high court. Over time, she evolved into a moderate conservative. On the court, O'Connor generally favored states in disputes with the federal government and for enhanced police powers challenged as violative of asserted individual rights.

