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COLBY FREE PRESS

Friday

July 8, 2005

50¢

Volume 116, Number 108
Serving Thomas County since 1888

Woman sentenced in child abuse case

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A Colby woman arrested earlier this year for child abuse has been sentenced. County Attorney Andrea Wyrick said Amanda Harris, 19, of Colby, was sentenced Wednesday in Thomas County District Court.



A. Harris

She received eight months probation for pleading guilty to a charge of aggravated battery.

Last month during another court appearance, Harris agreed to the plea in exchange for dropping a felony child abuse charge.

“Her sentence was going to be probation of some sort,” Wyrick said. “She doesn’t have a criminal history.”

She explained even if the case had gone to a jury trial, the outcome still would have been probation.

And because Harris had no prior criminal record, she gets probation, she said.

Wyrick said she thought it wiser to save taxpayer money and accept the plea bargain.

Harris was originally charged with attempted second degree murder, child abuse and aggravated battery. The charges came from an incident in mid-February when Harris’s then 23-month-old daughter was hurt and later airlifted to a Denver hospital.

According to police reports, the injuries were believed to be life-threatening

Harris was arrested on Feb. 23 after the incident was reported to the police by the Protection Report Center, which is an after-hours center for Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services.

Police had suspicion for abuse because of a head injury to the older child. However, they were unsure of the cause of her other injuries on her arms, legs, chest, buttocks and shoulders.

Following arrest, Harris was released on \$300,000 bond.

In May, Harris waived her preliminary hearing 20 minutes before it was scheduled. She later entered a plea at her June 1 arraignment.

Both of Harris’ children, the two-year-old and a younger daughter, are still living with a foster care family in western Kansas, and both are doing well, said Gary Shull, an investigator with the Colby Police Department.

Wyrick said they’re both “healthy, growing and happy.”

The next step for them is a child in need of care hearing, which is scheduled for some time in August.

“It’s a separate case from the criminal case,” she said, adding they’ll get an update on the progress being made on their behalf.

Wyrick said Harris’ parental rights may be terminated. She said in such cases, sometimes they try to get children back with their parents but said sometimes it doesn’t work.

“They won’t be going back with her,” Wyrick said.

Plea bargain reached in two district court cases

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A plea bargain in a felony drug case was downgraded during motion day Wednesday in Thomas County District Court.

Jeffrey Wayne Murphy, 27, of Colby, pleaded guilty to a burglary charge, which is a level 7 felony, said County Attorney Andrea Wyrick.

The charges stem from a Feb. 9,

2005 break-in at Berkgren Chemical and Fertilizer in Brewster.

According to court documents, he was originally charged with entering a building with the intent to commit a theft, theft of a digital scale, possession of methamphetamine, trespassing and possession of drug paraphernalia.

His sentencing is scheduled for Aug. 3. The possible sentence could be up to 17 months in prison, pro-

bation and up to a \$300,000 fine.

Another plea bargain was entered in the case of Ronald Ray Thompson. He was charged with illegal possession of a prescription drug.

His charges came from a Jan. 21, 2005 incident. Wyrick said Thompson filled a prescription for his wife and kept the codeine pills for himself.

His sentencing is also set for Aug. 3, court documents noted.

Commission meets Monday

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners have a busy agenda for their Monday meeting — everything from a budget request to employee health insurance are on the table.

The commissioners meet at 9 a.m. at the courthouse.

Also on the agenda is a discussion with Menlo City Clerk Sharon Munk on Menlo addresses.

The issue will be discussed because at the Thursday, June 30 commissioners meeting, emergency management director Jim Engel

said there was a problem with addressing that could be a liability issue.

Another continuing discussion is the issue of credit cards. Sheriff Mike Baughn will be on hand to talk about his office’s gas cards.

Employee health insurance is also up for discussion again because the county health committee made up of employees will bring back their recommendations for a health plan proposal.

The commissioners will hear a budget request from Thomas County Conservation District at

9:30 a.m.

The Thomas County Road Department supervisor Clair Schrock will be at the meeting to discuss personnel issues at 10 a.m.

At 10:15 a.m. Sandy Swob will be there to discuss household hazardous waste.

Also on the agenda are the approval of July 5 minutes; letter from Baughn on future lawn maintenance bids; road department June report; landfill totals for June and sampling results for April; and surveys from Thomas County Emergency Medical Service volunteers.

Man pleads guilty in solicitation

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A Colby man entered a guilty plea in Thomas County District Court on Wednesday.

Jacob Duane Rogers, 20, of Colby, pleaded guilty to a charge of aggravated solicitation of a child, which is a level 6 felony, said County Attorney Andrea Wyrick today.

Wyrick said Rogers was originally charged with rape but after an investigation recently by law enforcement officials, the charge was downgraded to aggravated solicitation.

Rogers’ charges stemmed from a Feb. 1, 2005 incident that alleged he had sexual intercourse with a juvenile who was under 14-years-old.

Wyrick said he will be labeled a sex offender and as far as a sentence goes, she said the charges will probably merit time in prison.

His sentencing is set for Sept. 7.

Up, up and away



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Trevor Strutt got his kite up in the air Thursday during a children’s kite class held at Colby United Methodist Church. The children were flying the kites they built during a three-hour class this week taught by Wayne and Millie Horlacher.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Susan, Blake, Brandon and Bob McLemore, who perform as The McLemore Family, sang during Picnic in the Park Thursday in Fike Park and will be among the many entertainers at the Pickin On the Plains Bluegrass Festival next weekend.

Colby’s 10th annual Festival here next weekend

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

In less than a week, Colby will be alive with bluegrass music and a “Smokin’ on the Plains” barbecue cookoff.

Now in its tenth year, Pickin’ On The Plains is scheduled for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 15-17 at the Thomas County fairgrounds.

There are 10 groups scheduled to entertain audiences throughout the weekend and the cookoff is being sponsored by Great American Outdoor Trails Radio Show.

Prior to the festival, the committee is again planning to have a pot-luck and jam session Thursday at 6:30 p.m. on the fairgrounds.

“Admission is free and everyone is invited to attend,” said Susan McLemore, one of the festival en-

tertainers and organizers.

The main event kicks off Friday at 6 p.m. until 10 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. with a gospel-sing-along at 10 a.m.

The festival is a family affair with many activities available for all ages, she said.

Arts and crafts, jam sessions, games, and horse-drawn wagon rides are only a sample of what visitors can expect, McLemore said.

As in year’s past, there will also be a bluegrass youth contest at 10 a.m., Saturday, with cash prizes to winners.

Entertainers on Friday and Saturday include: Sons and Brothers, who were the 2004 national bluegrass playoff champs; The New Old-Timers, a Kansas group; the

McLemore Family from Colby; Larry Booth, Colby; Sappa Strings of Colorado and the Pearce Family, which features parents and two sons.

Also on Saturday, The Chapmans and Spontaneous Combustion, both from Missouri will be featured, along with Colorado’s Hot Strings.

Marshall Allen Bailey of High Plains Public Radio plans to keep things busy on all three days and as always concessions will be available.

For tickets, call the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643 or (800) 611-8835. Advance tickets are discounted.

Watch for more details on bluegrass groups, activities and ticket location next week in the Colby Free Press.

Wheat yields vary around county

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The proof is in the fields. This year’s harvest has been touted as being better than last year’s and yields from area farmers prove that. There was considerable range in yields.

One farmer who had a good harvest was Joe Trembley of Colby. He said he’s almost done cutting and has had some “good yields” with an average of about 51 bushels an acre on 600 acres of dryland wheat north of Rexford.

“It wasn’t bad,” Trembley said. “It was a pleasant surprise. It was better than I expected.”

Test weight was also very good. He said it averaged 63 pounds per bushel.

“It was a very good harvest,” he said.

Another farmer who’s had a good harvest is Bill Miller of Colby.

He said he’s not done cutting but he’s cut enough wheat to know he had considerable variation in his fields.

“We’re still cutting north of Levant,” Miller said. “We should finish Sunday in time to go to the races.”

He said near Rexford, some of his fields yielded 68-70 bushels an acre on dryland wheat.

That, Miller said, was better than some of his irrigated fields in the northwest part of the county.

North of Levant, he had some wheat yield 7-8 bushels an acre and some go as high as 30.

On the irrigated side, the average yields were in the mid-60s.

He did have one irrigated field that had hail damaged but still managed to yield around 40 bushels per acre.

“There was a wide range,” he

said. “There was some good wheat.”

Miller said if the fields got a little rain, no rust, no freeze damage or other problems, the wheat was good.

“It was way better than last year,” Miller said.

He said some of the wheat that didn’t do very well had good potential but succumbed to drought and freeze damage.

However, some farmers didn’t have results as good as others.

Claude Herren of Colby declined to talk about his yields but said because of drought and freeze, his wheat suffered. His wheat was 12 miles southwest of Colby.

“It wasn’t very good,” he said.



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See ‘My Turn’ column, page 2

