



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Sleepless sleepover



Marita Sheaks of Oakley, Ceanne Rinehart, Cookie Koenig and Carolyn Miller of Colby all told jokes, sank and took part in skits during the Red Hat Society "Sleepless Sleepover" Friday at the

Senior Progress Center. Almost 30 members of the society enjoyed laughter, visiting and food during the event. Members from Colby and the surrounding area all attended.

TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

## Soldier longs to return home, see her children

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

HOXIE — A Hoxie woman keeps a close eye on the war in Iraq as she longs for her daughter and raises her grandchildren.

Rhonda Farber is full-time caregiver to Shannon Seeger, 9, and Kaden Flavin, 6, children of her daughter, Sgt. Carrie Seeger, who was deployed to Iraq in 2004.

"The worst part of all of this is the goodbyes," Rhonda Farber said. "I just don't know how the military can make that any easier. It can't."

Uncertain whether the public understands what military families are going through, Farber said it's a pain which doesn't go away.

"I walk around with an ache in my heart 24/7. I can't even begin to describe how painful it is to watch your daughter drive away in a military van knowing she is going to one of the most dangerous places to be in the world and knowing there is a possibility that you may never see her again. Derek Leuters from Goodland drove away that day from Hays with my daughter and his family lost him," Farber said.

"She is giving up her time with her children for her country. I know how painful it is for me to have my grown daughter gone, but it can't be anything compared to the pain my daughter feels being away from her children when they are so young," she said.

One of the biggest challenges Farber is experiencing comes in the role she plays in the children's lives.

"I'm being a Mom and a Grandma at the same time. I can't spoil them and send them home as they say," Farber said.

Taking on the responsibility of raising her grandchildren has taught Farber many things.

"Don't take your world for granted, it can change at anytime. It taught me to take the focus off of me and focus onto the two little people in our lives. (But) there is a reason why you should have your kids when you are young. Energy," Farber said.

Farber said while both of the chil-

### Final part of three-part series

dren understand why their mother is away from them, her granddaughter has had to confront children at school who didn't believe her mother was a soldier.

"Shannon understands more because she is older, but she is more emotional about it too for that same reason. We have both cried after a phone conversation with Carrie. We have both cried at bedtime after talking about Mommy. I have stayed awake at night thinking about Carrie and crying. There have been a lot of tears in our house in the last year," Farber said.

Explaining overseas deployment to a young child has been difficult for Farber. She said she has to answer difficult questions, particularly ones posed by her grandson.

"Kaden, who had just turned 5 when Carrie got deployed, at first wouldn't talk about it, and then out of the blue, he would ask a question like, 'Are the bad guys going to kill Mommy?'"

"I had to find a way to explain to him that Mommy is safe that he could understand. I told him that Mommy is inside the fence and that the bad guys can't hurt her inside the fence. I told him that there are people guarding the fence too. He accepted that, because at different times he would ask, 'Is Mommy still inside the fence? The bad guys can't hurt her there can they?'" Farber said.

She said her grandson also doesn't understand why he can't just pick up the phone and call his mother.

"Everyone has a phone in his world," Farber said.

Vigilant about caring for her grandchildren, Farber knows there is only one thing which will make the family whole again.

"It is tough, very tough. The ache in my heart will not go away until Carrie is on American soil to stay," Farber said.

## Education race could be in spotlight

TOPEKA (AP) — Connie Morris is a big political target for people who don't share her conservative views, and her attempt to win reelection next year to the State Board of Education again could put the global spotlight on Kansas.

Amid board discussions about rewriting science standards, she called evolution an "age-old fairy tale." She caused a stir even before

joining the board in January 2003 by suggesting the state shouldn't pay for educating illegal immigrants.

She is still under fire for a trip she made in March to Miami for a conference, even though she eventually reimbursed the state for most of her expenses. Opponents want an investigation by the attorney general's office.

"She's become a lightning rod in a lot of ways," said John Martellaro, president of Kansas Families United for Public Education. "What she's been doing is piling up opposition on many fronts."

Morris, a St. Francis Republican, wants a second four-year term representing the western half of the state. A former teacher, she won her seat by defeating 14-year incumbent

Sonny Rundell, of Syracuse, in the 2002 primary.

She said during an interview her campaign will stress helping rural schools and containing educational costs — as well as discuss concerns that the nation's borders aren't protected. "I suppose I just don't have a feel for whether or not I have been targeted," she said. "I guess I just don't concern myself with it."

## Car sideswipes tractor-trailer Friday

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

An incomplete lane change on Interstate 70 caused an accident on Friday morning.

According to a report filed by the

Kansas Highway Patrol, a west-bound 1998 Toyota passenger car driven by Mariyum A. Pickens, 34, of Denver, attempted to change lanes, but sideswiped a tractor-trailer in the process.

Both Pickens and her passenger, Andrea J. Dynes, 36, were wearing seatbelts when Pickens struck the 2005 International truck about 8-miles west of Colby.

The driven of the truck, Richard

S. Dickerson, 42, of Lakewood, Colo., was wearing a seatbelt and was not injured. Both women were taken to Citizens Medical Center where they were treated and released.

## Gardening event draws about 100 people

By Tisha Cox  
Colby Free Press

More than gardening tips were available during the Community Fall Garden Extravaganza Saturday.

The event, held at the Kansas State University Research and Extension Center, drew more than 100 people, said landscape supervisor Rodney Zimmerman.

Presentations were offered on topics like soils, water management, native grasses, K-State flower trials, "carefree gardens" and trees.

Zimmerman said this year, the annual event was changed from a weekday evening to a day-long event to accommodate more presentations and give more people the opportunity to attend.

He was pleased with the attendance and thought it went well.

He said only a few hours in one evening didn't offer the chance to get out all the information they wanted and the switch, they hoped, would also allow more questions to be asked and longer presentations.

There was a constant stream of people, Zimmerman said. "It's been pretty constant," he said.

"We got all the surrounding communities to show up," Zimmerman said.

"Everything seemed to make a really good draw."

Tours of the grounds were offered, giving attendees the opportunity to see all the horticultural work going on at the center, including the lawns, trees and flowers.

Zimmerman said people can get ideas about what they can do with



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Rodney Zimmerman, landscape supervisor at the Northwest Research Extension Center, checked over plants in a flower trial. The flower beds were part of the attraction during the center's Community Fall Garden Extravaganza held Saturday at the Center.

their own lawns or gardens, access to specialists and also troubleshoot any problems they might have.

The event also showed off flower trials, much like the wheat trials done in summer to give producers an idea how different varieties will

do. In this case, it's bedding plants and flowers.

He said it's to determine varieties guaranteed to do well in this state.

"Kansas has some pretty unique climate problems to overcome,"

Zimmerman said.

He added the garden event was a "big community effort" between the staff at the extension center and volunteers.

"It's a lot of work but I enjoy it," Zimmerman said.

## Colby man enters into plea bargain

By Tisha Cox  
Colby Free Press

A Colby man had his day in court Friday at the Thomas County Courthouse.

Dale A. Quast of Colby pleaded guilty to charges of possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and also entered the same plea on a misdemeanor disorderly conduct charge in Thomas County District Court.

His attorney, Doug Spencer of Oakley, said Quast had agreed to a plea bargain.

The charges stemmed from an April 1 incident where Quast and Jeremy Palmer were arrested after a high speed chase down Franklin

Avenue, authorities said at that time. Quast was charged with possession of methamphetamine with intent to sell within 1,000 feet of a school; sale of methamphetamine; conspiracy to commit sale of a stimulant; possession of a hallucinogenic drug; possession of drug paraphernalia with intent to sell or distribute; no drug tax stamp; possession of drug paraphernalia and fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer.

His probation was handed over to Community Corrections to oversee and he will remain out on bond.

Quast's sentencing was scheduled for 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 7.

## Assault charges filed

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Two men in their 50s were involved in an argument over the weekend which ended with one of them arrested. Colby Police Department Detective Gary Shull said officers searched more than 12 hours for the suspect in the case.

Shull said Richard Girard Barnett, 53, called the Colby Police Department two minutes after 8 p.m. on Friday reporting he was the victim of an assault with a weapon.

"Barnett reported Steven E. Gilbert, 54, of Colby, had pulled a gun

on him twice during an argument or discussion. Officers were unable to locate Gilbert immediately. He was located and arrested at his residence on Saturday morning at 9:22 a.m.," Shull said. Gilbert was arrested on charges of aggravated assault and is being held in the Thomas County Jail pending filing of formal charges with the county attorney. Shull said neither man was injured in the incident, but alcohol is believed to be involved on the part of Gilbert. He said the officer's report does not indicate whether Barnett had been drinking.



