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TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

David Orth, mobile unit assistant with the American Red Cross, readied pints of blood for shipment at a blood drive held Wednesday at the Colby Community Building. Organizers said the drive exceeded expectations. Another drive is planned for January.

More than 150 units Blood drive exceeds goal

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A "success." That's what organizers are calling the American Red Cross blood drive held Wednesday at the Colby Community Building.

"This blood drive was fantastic in all areas," said co-chair Jo Cheney.

They met their goal of 150 units donated, and ended up with 151 viable units from 163 people. Of those, 12 people were first-time donors.

"It was a good day," she said.

Cheney said making their goal was important, but the number of walk-ins, first-timers and people who kept their appointments was what made this drive notable.

"The 12 first-time donors is above average," she said. "The number of walk-ins was huge. Walk-ins are always welcome."

She said she really couldn't attribute the number

of walk-ins to any one cause, but suggested it could be because many sometimes come in when it's convenient instead of making an appointment.

There were 146 appointments made for the blood drive.

Cheney said she and co-chair Jackie Stephens were also pleased with the help they received from volunteers.

"The volunteers were great," Cheney said. "Thanks to all who helped with registration, by escorting, in the canteen or unloading and loading the truck. It takes us all to make a blood drive successful."

The next Red Cross blood drive will be from noon to 6 p.m. on Jan. 18 at the Community Building.

Cheney said the Colby Community College nursing department will be holding their own drive between now and then if people want to donate to that drive.

Fall harvest begins; farmers face dilemma

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Fall harvest has already begun in Thomas County. Some farmers have cut their crops that didn't do well because of hot, dry weather earlier this summer, said Brian Olson, extension agronomist for northwest Kansas at the Northwest Research-Extension Center.

But harvest won't be into full swing for at least another few weeks.

"You'll see corn being harvested here and there around the area," Olson said.

Over the next few weeks, he said, farmers will have a dilemma — having to choose between harvesting their fall crop or planting wheat.

Olson said most farmers will have something to harvest.

He said the fields that missed out on rain will have low or no yields.

On dryland corn, Olson said some farmers could have yields up to 100-120 bushels an acre. Irrigated corn should have "fairly decent yields" also, he said, if it pollinated before very hot weather at the end of July and beginning of August.

"Guys are pleased with what they're seeing out there," Olson said.

Some corn yields have been in the 10-20 bushel range and has already been cut for silage.

Other crops should fare relatively well, he said.

Most of the dryland sorghum should be cut, Olson said, along with most of the dryland sunflowers in the area. Sunflower yields could range from 500 to 1,500 or 2,000 pounds per acre.

Irrigated soybeans should also do "fine."

Around the same time as harvest should start, wheat drilling will commence. He said rain in the next few days would help soil moisture when the crop goes in. Olson added if farmers didn't work their ground too much between harvest this summer and now, they should have some soil moisture intact.

Another advantage for farmers right now is slowly decreasing fuel prices. "That will be a good thing for farming," Olson said.

It's also been rumored that there will be transportation problems with moving grain after harvest because of Hurricane Katrina.

Jeff Mettlen, manager of ADM Collingwood Grain Inc. in Brewster, said they should start taking in grain in a couple of weeks.

He also said they aren't anticipating any transport problems because of Hurricane Katrina.

Colby defense attorney authors handbook chapter

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A Colby attorney has been chosen to author one of the state's criminal handbooks used by attorneys and judges.

Todd Stramel is one of three attorneys west of Salina asked by the Kansas Bar Association to update the Kansas Criminal Law Handbook.

Published by the association, Stramel is one of 28 attorneys statewide helping with the updated edition due out next spring.

"The Kansas Criminal Law Handbook is being completely revised and it will probably be revised on an annual basis after that," Stramel said on Wednesday afternoon.

A Colby native, Stramel graduated from Colby High School in 1989. He graduated from Kansas State University in 1993, and went on to Washburn University to earn a law degree in 1996.

"I've always liked Colby and I like being involved in agriculture and the family farm.

And, I've always wanted to be in business for myself," Stramel said.

Prior to returning to Colby, Stramel was in private practice in Hays, and was a prosecutor for the 18th Judicial District in Sedgwick County before that.

Authoring the chapter called Commencement of Prosecution and the District Court; Stramel started the task in April 2003, and at the time submitted a first draft.

"The chapter covers a lot of the

"My clients hire me to get them off and I do everything within my ability to make that happen, always staying within the ethical parameters of the law."

Rod Eisenbise, chapter president

procedural aspects that are involved in a criminal case," he said.

"My deadline to have it to the editor was August 1, and the editor is reviewing it and will be submitting it to the publisher later this year or early next year."

Stramel's work on the handbook is strictly done on a volunteer basis.

"Basically it's time I donate to the Kansas Bar Association," Stramel said.

"Lawyers and judges consider it an honor to be asked by the association to author a chapter of the handbook so there's no charge for doing it."

Stramel said finding time to write the chapter was his largest obstacle.

"The most challenging aspect of it was finding time to do it. It's pretty time intensive and I stay pretty busy with my case load. And to add to the top of it was pretty challenging," Stramel said.

Besides Stramel's law practice responsibilities, he and his wife, Melissa, had their second child during the writing process.

Besides their newborn, Anna,

born June 15, the couple has a son, Nathan. "We have two under two," Stramel said of the ages of his children. In practice now for nine years, Stramel said his work on the chapter has been very rewarding.

"The most rewarding part of it is just the fact of being recognized by the Kansas Bar Association as having the expertise to be a contributing author," Stramel said.

Now strictly a defense attorney, Stramel said he's glad to have seen both sides of the courtroom in his career.

"It was an easy transition for me because I think it's a lot easier to defend criminal cases if you have experience in prosecution of criminal cases.

"My clients hire me to get them off and I do everything within my ability to make that happen, always staying within the ethical parameters of the law," Stramel said.

Pleased to be practicing law in Colby, Stramel said he has no plans to make significant changes within his firm. "I plan to just keep doing what I'm doing," he said.

Retired couple continue Habitat for Humanity adventure

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Two years ago, Jim and Gayonna McDonald of Colby traded their computers at the post office for hammers on construction sites.

"All started when they bought a motor home, retired from the Colby Post Office in 2003 and began thinking of what they would do with their free time.

The couple said they wanted to travel around the country visiting family, seeing new places and helping others part of the time and then returning to Colby at other times to live in their home north of town.

"When we financially figured out where we were, though, it wasn't possible for us to keep both our house and the motor home," Jim said.

Given the choice, they ended up selling the house, keeping the motor home and traveling with Habitat for Humanity.

For both Jim and Gayonna, the experiences have been enjoyable.

"We have met so many interesting people from all different denominations," Gayonna said, "and



J. McDonald



G. McDonald



Gayonna (far right) and Jim McDonald of Colby worked on a house for Habitat for Humanity recently.

homeowners.

Through the help of volunteers, like the McDonalds, selected families can purchase a home for about 60 percent of its value and with zero interest often resulting in payments that are lower than the family's previous rent.

"These houses are right up there with some of the best builders," Jim said about the quality.

Even though some may not have a lot of construction experience, it

doesn't take long to learn.

"Gayonna has put enough siding on the three houses we did last year," Jim said, "that she was teaching other ladies how to do it."

As for Jim, he said he is willing to do just about anything as long as it isn't working up high like on a roof.

He has learned to follow a blueprint and along with maybe 8 to 14 other people at any given project, he and Gayonna both have learned to

build a house from the foundation up — complete with installing electrical wiring and plumbing.

It all depends on the Habitat for Humanity affiliate as to whether or not codes require certified electricians, plumbers, etc. to do certain work.

The couple returned to Colby in May to get rid of items they had in storage, sell a rental house they owned and visit Gayonna's mother, Doris Voisin.

Last year, Gayonna said they traveled to Greenwood, S.C.; Siler City, N.C. and Richmond, Ind.

When they weren't working on a house, they stayed in their motor home, along with other motor home campers on the project. In Siler City, they were parked on a retired horse ranch farm with about 80 horses spending their remaining years in retirement. Some were lame, some retired from racing and one horse had been there for 27 years.

In Richmond, Ind., they stayed on a Christian school campus for troubled youth that was located half in Ohio and half in Indiana.

After the couple visits family in Kansas and Arkansas during the next couple of weeks, they will then head to Jackson, Miss. where other "Care-A-Vanners" in recreational vehicles will be gathering for new assignments.

One of their next big projects, Gayonna said, will be the "home in a box" building project for the Hurricane Katrina victims beginning at the end of September.

Known as "Operation Home Delivery," people like Jim and Gayonna will be among the first to take part in this pilot project with Habitat for Humanity.

"I enjoy what we are doing," said Gayonna, who was born and raised in Colby. "In my own mind," said Jim, "I never could see me retired — I figured I would still be doing the same job in my 80s."

And as for their decision to pick up stakes and move around the country helping others — they both agreed it has been good for them.

For those wanting to get in touch with the McDonalds or learn more about Habitat for Humanity, email them at: colbypm@yahoo.com

