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TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Matt Junker (foreground), Blain Budke and Brett Budke pushed a spa inside the Colby Community Building Thursday in preparation for this weekend's Better Home and Living Show. Blain is

the owner of Tri State Spas in McCook, Neb., one of many exhibitors participating in the show. The show opened at 4 p.m. today and reopens Saturday at 10 a.m.

Annual home show opens its doors

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

No need to bring your wallet, but organizers of the Better Home and Living Show, which opened today, hope everyone brings their imagination to the Colby Community Building.

The Better Home and Living Show will continue from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday.

"This is our 16th year," said Mike Fell, KXXX-KQLS general manager and co-sponsor of the event, "and what makes the

show special is the non-threatening atmosphere allowing people to envision what they want to do."

In describing the show, Fell said it's a mix of lawn and garden exhibits with health and fitness booths and other businesses.

"The name 'Better Home' referring literally to a better home and 'Living' Show denoting a better way to live," he said.

With about 40 exhibitors, the show will have displays throughout the gymnasium, on the stage, and outside. One new feature this year is the Thomas County voting machine and demonstration by Tho-

mas County Clerk Shelly Harms.

Colby Community College will offer information about its spring courses and other programs.

In addition to many local vendors, Fell said Wolf Creek Accents from Strasburg, Colo., will be available to talk about oak wood and other ideas.

Another highlight was Decision Weather, a meteorologist's business in Atwood.

"The owner contracts with farmers and other related businesses by forecast weather," Fell said.

The exhibitors will be available to help the crowd envision what

they want their home to look like this spring and summer.

The show's other sponsor is the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce with volunteers from the Colby Ambassadors welcoming people to the event with programs.

Colby Girl Scouts will offer food and drinks at the concession stand.

"There is no admission fee," Fell said, "and this event draws from northwest, and north-central Kansas, along with east-central Colorado and southwest Nebraska."

Meatpacker sues government over BSE

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Kansas meatpacker sued the government on Thursday for refusing to let the company test for BSE disease in every animal it slaughters.

Creekstone Farms Premium Beef says it has Japanese customers who want comprehensive testing. The Agriculture Department threatened criminal prosecution if Creekstone did the tests, according to the company's lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Washington.

"We're not in any way saying that U.S. beef isn't safe; we believe it's the safest beef supply in the world, but that's not the issue," chief executive John Stewart said at a news conference.

"We're talking about consumers, and consumers want the product tested," Stewart said.

Testing for BSE disease in the United States is controlled by the department, which tests about 1 percent of the 35 million cattle, or about 350,000, that are slaughtered each year. The department is planning to reduce that level of testing.

Stewart said he was surprised at the plan to scale back testing.

"Given the concerns internationally, I'm not so sure that's the right thing to do."

Private companies certified by the department make screening tests used to detect BSE disease. The department says it has sole authority over the sale and use of the tests.

Department officials say they oppose 100 percent testing because

it does not ensure food safety. The disease is difficult to detect in younger animals, which are the source of most beef.

Larger meatpackers worry that insistence from Japanese buyers would force them to do testing and that a suspect result might scare consumers away from eating beef.

It would cost about \$20 per animal to do the tests, adding about 10 cents per pound to the cost of meat, according to Stewart.

Japan tests nearly all its cattle for BSE disease. While individual companies there may want more testing in the U.S., Japan's government is not asking the U.S. to do the same.

For now, Japan has halted American beef shipments because inspectors in January found cuts of U.S. veal containing backbone, which is banned in Japan even though it's eaten in the U.S.

Japan had only recently lifted a ban on American beef imposed after the first U.S. case of BSE disease in 2003. Until then, Japan was the top foreign buyer of American beef, accounting for around \$1.4 billion in sales in 2003.

Creekstone cut production and laid off about 150 employees at its Arkansas City, Kan., plant because of the ban.

Stewart said Creekstone's customers understand the limitations of the tests. He added that he expects Japan to reopen its market regardless of whether Creekstone is allowed to test its cattle.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Scott Platt, manager of Rosen's, Inc., Colby distribution center looked over a packing form for a new load of agricultural chemicals.

The business opened a month ago in Colby and temporarily quarters at Golden Plains At Tech.

Colby welcomes new farm chemical business

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

A new agricultural business has opened its doors in Colby.

Rosen's, Inc. Colby distribution center opened a month ago said manager Scott Platt.

The company is an agricultural chemical distributor who sells wholesale to businesses that sell the product to farmers.

"We don't sell to the farmer, we're just a wholesaler," he said, adding they deal in chemicals

such as herbicides and insecticides.

The decision to expand into northwest Kansas began last year.

"They had been researching this for more than a year to come out here," Platt said.

"There's a lot of potential for our company here in this area."

The Colby location gives opportunities to distribute chemicals in northwest Kansas, as well as into Nebraska, Colorado and Oklahoma.

Rosen's home office is in Fairmont, Minn., with a corporate

office in Liberty, Mo.

The Colby business is in temporary quarters at Golden Plains At Tech.

Plans are in the works to build a 30,000-square-foot distribution center in the Stephens Industrial Complex.

Platt said construction should start later this spring, and be finished in six to nine months.

Platt is one of three employees currently in Colby.

They plan to bring on four or five more employees over the next year

and even more after the new building is complete.

He said they will distribute chemicals out of their own warehouse and haul product to customers.

Platt moved to Colby from Garnett, and is looking forward to the company's first growing season here.

"As a company we're excited to be here, and we're looking forward to future expansion in this area," he said.

Teacher's actions lead to termination

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The Colby School Board held a special meeting this morning to take action on termination of a tenured teacher.

Board member Stan Molstad read a resolution, which the board approved, to terminate the contract of special education teacher Randy Koons effective today.

A hearing was held March 14, with Koons, due process hearing officer Lloyd C. Swartz of the Kansas Supreme Court, Koons' lawyer Gene F. Anderson and school district counsel John D. Gatz.

Janel Andrews, secretary to the superintendent, said the board's decision was based on the findings by Swartz from the hearing.

In his decision, Swartz presented three reasons why the district adopted a resolution in August 2005 to terminate Koons' contract.

According to the hearing document, treasons are:

- She provided students with access and allowed them to use teacher's manuals to complete credited assignments on May 5, 2005, and other occasions;
- Recorded student grades that weren't earned which happened during the third nine weeks of the 2004-2005 school year;

- She provided "inaccurate" information to the administration during the investigations of the incidents.

Koons was not at today's meeting. She taught for two years at Colby High School. Koons was unavailable for comment this morning.

The board also approved several resignations including Derek Bissitt as boys head basketball coach.

Bissitt will continue as head girls coach. He coached both teams this year, and had success with the varsity girls who made it to the substate semifinals.

Other resignations were of Shaun and Amanda Kidder, who are moving to South Dakota, said district financial officer Jo DeYoung.

Shaun is eighth grade social studies teacher at Colby Middle School and Amanda is vocal music teacher for grades six through 12.

Bob Mannebach, Colby High School business teacher and head cross country coach, is retiring.

Board members Tracy Rogers, Molstad, Dewey Augustine and Joel Powell were at the meeting. Board member Janice Frahm cast her votes via telephone. Board member Kevan Taylor arrived after the votes were taken.

Board member Gerry Fulwider was absent.

Museum needs input

Three town meetings to save Colby's Prairie Museum of Art and History will be held at 5:30 p.m. the next three Mondays, March 27, April 3 and April 10.

"Community participation is needed to help find solutions to present and future funding needs for the Thomas County Historical Society and Prairie Museum of Art and History," said Sue Taylor, director.

The historical society raises over two-thirds of the museum's money. Out of the \$200,000 operating bud-

get, Taylor said, \$65,000 is received from the county and the rest is raised through donations and earned income. Taylor said the historical society operates the 24-acre complex next to Interstate 70.

Included on the site are six historic structures, the museum building, a metal storage building and a 10-acre native grass exhibit.

"Today, the museum serves as a quality cultural institution that attracts both resident and visitor populations," she said.