

COLBY PRESS

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Forensics team readies for state event

<u>By Tisha Cox</u>

Colby Free Press

Members of the Colby High School forensics team showcased their talents in a variety of public performances Monday. The pieces performed by students were all either qualified for the state championship tournament or festival.

"We've had our best year ever," said coach Nancy Rundel.

There are 11 entries qualified for the state championship and four are students who qualified in two

"That's a first," Rundel said. Both events are Saturday, May 6. The state championship will be held at Washburn Rural High School in Topeka and the state festival is at Kansas City Community College in Kansas City.

Rundel said it's difficult to qualify for the state tournament and it requires a first or second place finish. The state festival requires anywhere from a first to fourth place finish to qualify.

She said 33 students started out the season, and 26 stayed in the pro-

"That's a good-sized team,"

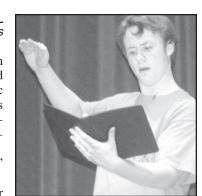
The year the team has had its best showing is also the last year with Rundel as head coach. She resigned that position recently, but will be help out next year as needed.

She is pleased with the work the students have put out.

"I think we did pretty good," she said. "They've done a great job this

ship are:

Robyn Schmid, senior, serious



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Sophomore Curtis Fulwider read his poetry piece "Petite Rouge Riding Hood."

ing; Hank Lamm, junior, original oration and extemporaneous speaking; Curtis Fulwider, sophomore, poetry; Paige Pfeifer, sophomore, poetry; Courtney Ress, sophomore, prose and poetry; Porscha Selley, sophomore, serious solo acting; April McAdams, junior, humorous solo acting; Jennifer Horinek, junior, and April McAdams, junior, improvised duet acting.

State festival qualifiers are:

Teressa Rocha, senior, prose; Katie Strange, sophomore, prose; Kelly Gerstner, sophomore, and Strange, duet acting; Paul Schrick, senior, and Fulwider, improvised duet acting; Katelyn Houtz and Sami Tole, freshmen, duet acting; Kortney Khan, freshman, poetry.

Other team members are: Kayla Sloan, Danni Baker, Kylie Kennedy and William Mruzek, freshmen.

Sophomores: Darci Brown, Jes-

sica Cox and Jaewoo Jeong. Juniors: Jasmine Brown, Liz Qualifying for state champion- Erickson, Cyndi Rothfuss and John

Assistant coaches are Linda solo acting and informative speak- Jones and Regina Heier.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

A city crew worked to tear out four concrete slabs at the southwest corner of the Colby Swimming Pool.

Pool repairs should not delay opening

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Dirt settling beneath concrete slabs around the Colby Municipal Pool prompted city crews to begin repair work Wednesday, said Marc Gilman director of the city's public utilities.

four concrete slabs in the southwest corner were affected," he said, "but we aren't sure how far

we will need to go."

Gilman speculates the problem was created when dirt under the concrete was not compacted properly years ago when new concrete was added around the pool. "A couple other areas look suspicious,"

City workers are currently "So far it looks like only the recompacting the dirt and replacing the concrete.

said he is optimistic that the pool fore formulating a game plan," will open Memorial Day weekend.

"We are trying to eliminate the trip hazards that have happened due 1930s as a WPA project during to the ground under the concrete the depression-era times, but is deck settling," he said.

Sturdy said an engineer from Penco Engineering Company will visit today to look at the pool and assess the situation.

"The engineer will do some test-Director of City Recreation and ing and take some core samples be made in getting the pool ready supervisor of the pool Ryan Sturdy around the outside of the pool be- for opening day.

he said.

The city pool was built in the

maintained on a regular basis. "We keep everything up-todate and new pumps are installed every year," said Gilman about the maintenance.

Gilman said every effort will

Increased rates: Two years and \$2 million later

By John Van Nostrand

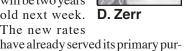
Colby Free Press

City of Colby officials are making sure this is

not money down the drain. In fact, it's

money for a new drain.

Colby's increased rates for sewer and water will be two years old next week.



pose. Rates have generated \$2.2 million for the city's new sewer system currently under construction. "We've reached that goal," said

city of Colby Finance Director

May 1,2004, city officials implemented new rates, something that had not been done in years. According to city documents, the previous rates had a tenuous relationship with the city's sewer system.

"It did not build any cash reserves to pay for a new treatment plant, In addition to building the new sewer plant, the city needs an additional major sewer main to serve the business expansion occurring on both sides of I-70.

The city's sewer plant dates back to 1932. The last improvement to the plant was in 1996. In 2003, the city was informed of new requirements from the state about sewer operations.

The city knew then the current system would not meet those new requirements when they go into effect next year.

"It shows how much the sewer plant is decaying," said Sherry Ummel, who processes city utility

Not only did the city need to maintain what sewer services it already had, but Zerr said the city was expecting more growth near the interstate.

"There were several business along I-70, and the new Wal-Mart was coming, everything between Willow and Horton avenues," she

Estimated cost for the new sewer system is \$8.6 million. Zerr said that amount was calculated two years cause people move in and out." ago, but some numbers have since

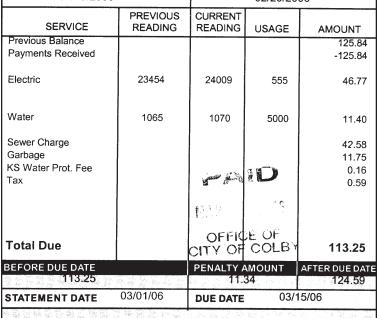
"With Katrina, construction materials are going up," Zerr said.

Last summer's hurricanes in the Gulf Coast have increased the cost of construction materials because of the high demand and rebuilding in the region.

Even though Colby's new plant is expected to be finished and working in 2007, Zerr said the city is already making payments on construction. She said it is too early to tell just exactly how much the new creased because of the relation beplant will cost.

"Prices have gone up, but we are getting construction materials here," she said.

The city is paying for 20 percent dents. of the new sewer system through the



increased rates. For the remaining 80 percent, the city is using statebacked financing over 20 years.

Zerr and Ummel said it is difficult to determine how much the sewer the city heard plant costs to operate on a monthly

"It changes," Ummel said, "be-

According to city records, in March sewer expenses totaled \$470,000, but \$440,000 of that is related to new plant construction costs. Reviewing the past 12 months, the city's expenses for the sewer was \$1.1 million.

That averages to about \$92,000 a month. Rates were increased to meet financial needs at the sewer. The minimum monthly sewer

rate nearly doubled from \$4.56 to Rates for water use also in-

tween water and sewer use. As soon as the new rates were made to the public, the utility office

heard complaints from the resi-

"It was non-stop for five days,"

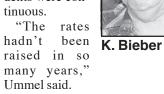
Zerr said.

People were so accustom to those rates, the change

about it. Telephone calls from residents were con-

was a shock and

The hadn't raised in many years,'



Ummel said. Colby Mayor Ken Bieber, who served on the city's utility board at

the time of the increase, said the city was forced to change the rates and improve the sewer system because of the state's requirements. Bieber said the city could have

inquired about a bond issue to pay for the plant, bond issues relate to taxes. Bieber said the research then switched to the monthly fees and

'We had no choice," he said, "but it was something that should have been done years before.'

Agreement seen for compromise on funeral picketing bill

TOPEKA (AP) — One question year to consider legislation restrictfor House and Senate negotiators ing protest activities around funerreworking legislation prompted by the Rev. Fred Phelps and his followers is how far they can legally be kept back when protesting funerals of U.S. troops killed in combat.

Negotiators met Wednesday and said they're optimistic they can agree as lawmakers began their wrap-up session.

"We're trying to move in the same direction. It's just a matter of getting the language right," said Rep. John Edmonds, lead House negotiator. The House version bans anybody

closer than 300 yards one hour before, during and two hours after a funeral service. The Senate banned protests within 100 yards. "We still think less is smarter, and

we'll just have to see where we come out on it," said Sen. Pete Brungardt, his chamber's chief negotiator. "We want to go to a limit that's constitutional.'

The measure doesn't single out Phelps or his followers, who contend the combat deaths are God's vengeance for the U.S. harboring homosexuals, and that their protests are a form of religious expression. For years, Phelps and his followers protested funerals of AIDS victims but have shifted to soldiers.

Stephen McAllister, University of Kansas Law School professor and constitutional scholar, told negotiators the U.S. Supreme Court hasn't set any specific distance. ration is legally acceptable?" he

Kansas is among 27 states this Bend.

als, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Distances imposed by other states range from 100 feet to 1,000 feet, McAllister said, and most have cho-

"I'm wary about 300 feet, because the court has never upheld that distance," McAllister said. "What I'm suggesting is less is more, maybe not politically, but legally.'

sen 300 feet.

Another issue is where protesters

The Senate exempted from the buffer zone streets, sidewalks and other public spaces, because the court has ruled those areas are public venues. But the House made it unlawful to obstruct or prevent the intended uses of public streets and sidewalks or other public space.

Brungardt, R-Salina, said the committee wants language to prevent places such as streets and sidewalks from being obstructed from their intended use.

"It's just a matter of coming up with the language," he said.

McAllister said lawmakers "absolutely" can impose limits on noisy demonstrations that disrupt a funeral service. The idea of regulating noise

around a funeral found support with negotiators, although it wasn't addressed in either the Senate or House version. "It allows the family of the de-

"The question is: How much sepa-ceased to have an appropriate service without interference from outsiders," said Edmonds, R-Great