



COLBY FREE PRESS



Lynn Eisenbart/Contributed photo



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

NASCAR driver stops in Colby

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Colby had a couple of celebrities and a few hundred of their friends visit Wednesday.

The Chick-fil-A Kyle Petty Charity Ride made a stop at the Oasis Travel Center to allow riders to fill up and eat lunch on their cross-country journey. The annual ride raises money for Victory Junction Gang Camp, a summer camp for children with chronic or life-threatening illnesses, and other charities. Petty and his wife, Pattie, opened the camp in North Carolina in honor of their son, Adam.

Petty, driver of the No. 45 car in the NASCAR Nextel Cup Series and son of NASCAR legend Richard Petty, and retired NFL football player Herschel Walker signed autographs for fans.

Jason Woofter, manager of the Oasis, said though other rides have stopped at the center, the Petty event was the biggest yet.

"It was great," Woofter said. "We were excited they picked Colby to do it. They enjoyed the facility and what we offered."

After eating lunch, the more than 200 bikers fueled up. The entire process took only 15-20 minutes, Woofter said, because none of the riders had to get off their bikes. Designated fuelers filled up the bikes and more than 450 gallons were pumped.

The nine-day ride started Saturday in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The trip will end Sunday at the camp.

Jim Vap of Colby donated a Nextel Cup banner signed by Petty, Walker and everyone else on the ride. It will be auctioned off at a later date to benefit Victory Junction.

Lynn and Josh Eisenbart were two of the many fans who showed up to get pictures and autographs.

Lynn said her husband, Josh, got Walker's autograph, and also a couple of other famous people. She said she was impressed with how many people turned out for the event, and that Petty would pick Colby for a stop.

"Kyle Petty may be known for racing in NASCAR but what he will really be remembered for is all of the ways that he has helped children in the U.S.," Lynn said. "I'm glad that he took the time to stop in Colby. It's not everyday that we have a touch of the rest of the world in our little town."

She said Colby should be honored to be included in this event.

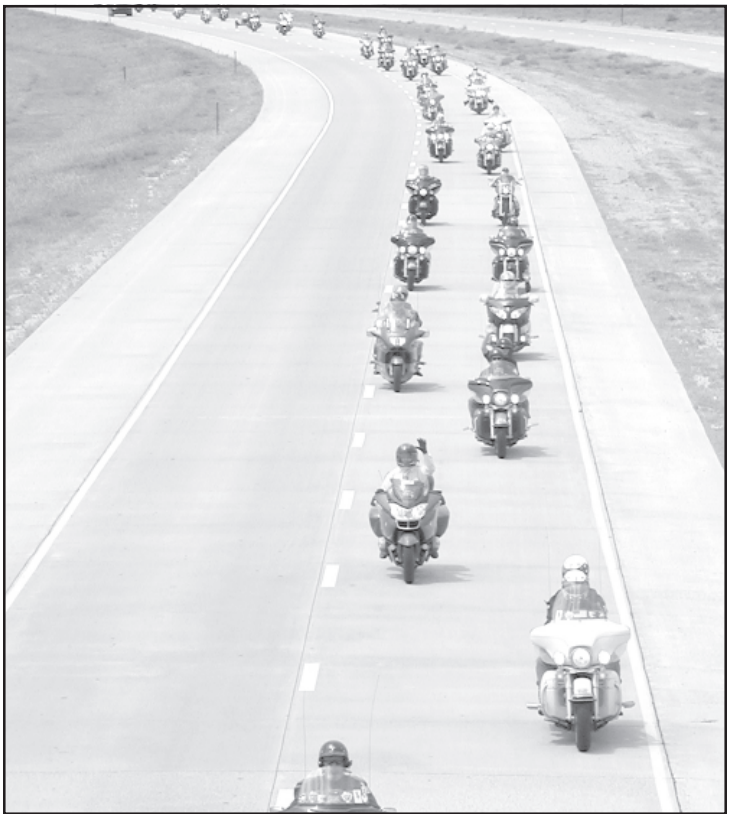
"The Oasis Truck Stop is usually busy but I have never seen so many motorcycles filling with fuel at one time. It is great that he



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

TOP LEFT: A motorcycle with a side car filled with donations was one of the many sights during the Kyle Petty Charity Ride stop in Colby Wednesday. **TOP RIGHT:** About 200 motorcycles from the ride were lined up on the east side of City Limits Convention Center, where the riders had lunch. **ABOVE:** Kyle Petty, driver of the No. 45 car in the NASCAR Nextel Cup Series, signed autographs for fans Wednesday at the City Limits Convention Center during a brief stop on his annual charity ride. **RIGHT:** Bikers on the Kyle Petty Charity Ride passed through Goodland on their way to Randleman, N.C.

has been able to get so many people interested in the cause. I hope they continue to be successful in their efforts to raise money for children's needs."



TOM BETZ/Goodland Star News

Low-key GOP primary governor stirs little interest

MANKATO (AP) — Seven candidates are seeking the Republican nomination, but the governor's race seems to have missed parts of north-central Kansas.

Potential voters attending the annual Jewell County Threshing Bee have concerns, of course, such as fuel prices and federal agriculture policy.

It's just that the governor's race is relatively low on the list

of things to contemplate.

Jewell County's seat, with its 840 or so residents, isn't the only place apathy appears more prevalent than buzz. Political scientists and activists are predicting a low turnout in Tuesday's primary, and until last week, Kansans saw no television ads. The leading GOP contenders, Jim Barnett, Ken Canfield and Robin Jennison, are crossing the state, trying to distinguish themselves.

Thomas County man could face life in jail

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A Colby man may spend the rest of his life in prison for allegedly raping an 8-year-old Thomas County girl earlier this month.

Melvin W. Meyers, 59, having no known address, has been formally charged in Thomas County District Court with five sex crimes.

Meyers was arrested at a residence in the 3400 block of County Road B July 13.

He is still in custody at Thomas County Jail.

Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn said Meyers has been living in Thomas County for about seven years.

Baughn said Meyers has been using the alias name of Pete Helt and was wanted in another state on similar charges.

Thomas County Undersheriff Jason Moses on Monday said besides the charges filed in Thomas County, Meyers is wanted in Oklahoma for the alleged sexual abuse of a minor child in the 1990s.

It has yet to be determined whether Meyers will face the charges in

Weed director quits over feud

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

The search is on for a new noxious weed director for Thomas County.

Thomas County Commissioners Ron Evans, Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen learned Monday Ken Ptacek's last day to work for the county will be Aug. 31. Ptacek would have started his 12th year with Thomas County in September, but he said he has "had enough" as director.

An ongoing feud between two Thomas County landowners over noxious weeds prompted Ptacek's resignation, but he said he didn't want to close the door on working for the county.

"The weed department could save some money if it would go to one and one-half employees," Ptacek said. "I'd like to keep my foot in the door and I'd be willing to stay on as part time depending on whom you hire."

While the names of the two landowners were not mentioned, Ptacek

said one refuses to control bindweed and the other refuses to control musk thistle which keep creeping across boundary lines.

Talk about giving the two landowners official notice to control their weeds took place.

"Task everyone in Thomas County to control your musk thistle, bindweed and prairie dogs," Evans said.

State law requires landowners to control noxious weeds, as well as encroaching prairie dogs.

Ptacek said he has between two and three weeks of spraying to finish and he will have done for the season what he can effectively do for weeds.

"It used to be a good neighbor plan where we all helped each other out," Christiansen said. "But we are getting so many out of state landowners and it just isn't the same as it used to be."

In other business, Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms talked with the commissioners about aging air conditioning units at the courthouse.

Harms said of the eight units, two have completely quit working.

The commissioners directed Harms to research finding someone to do the work of upgrading current units with parts or complete units donated by Cheyenne County.



K. Ptacek

College receives \$74,372 grant

The Kansas Board of Regents recently awarded nearly \$3.4 million in nursing grants to 20 public higher education institutions including Colby Community College.

Institutions with registered nurse programs were eligible to apply to the board for these grants which were made available when, in May, the legislature approved, and the governor signed into law, the first year of a 10-year Board of Regents' initiative to address the critical nursing shortage in the state of Kansas.

"These grants represent an exciting first step in a ten-year commitment to addressing the critical nursing shortage facing the state of Kansas. The legislature must be commended for its commitment to and recognition of this important issue," said Reginald Robinson, President and CEO of the Board of Regents. "This program powerfully demonstrates how the state's higher education institutions play a vital workforce development role in Kansas. The board looks forward to addressing this critical issue - an issue that only increases in importance as the state's population continues to age."

The board's 10-year nursing initiative is a three-part \$30 million plan that ultimately aims to increase nursing capacity in Kansas by 25 percent. Of the \$30 million total cost, \$22 million will come from state appropriations while \$8 million will be committed through matching funds by the participating educational institutions.

These grants were separated into three major areas of emphasis for which eligible institutions could apply. These areas of emphasis are: 1) nursing equipment and facility upgrades; 2) nursing faculty salaries and supplies; and 3) nurse educator scholarships. Each of these grants requires matching funds from the applying institution or other sources.

Colby Community College will receive \$29,610 for one full-time and one part-time nursing faculty member, and \$44,762 for a patient simulator and related instructional equipment (total: \$74,372).

Kerri Schippers is the director of the CCC nursing program. Level I (LPN) and Level II (RN) programs are available on the Colby campus. A second Level II (LPN) program is offered by CCC at the Norton County Hospital facility.

"These grants will allow us to create scenarios on the sophisticated patient simulator to better prepare nursing students as they enter the clinical phase of their training," said Schippers. "It will enhance our teaching methods in both the LPN and RN programs."

Colby increased the number of LPN students on the Colby campus from 20 to 30 for fall 2006. The RN program was also increased from 30 to 40 for the upcoming year.

"When the Norton Hospital completes the proposed remodeling project, we will have the capability to increase LPN students from 18 up to 30 students," Schippers said.

Editor's Note: See related editorial on page 2