



COLBY FREE PRESS

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County names three doctors to positions

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

All three medical clinics in Colby had a doctor appointed to a county position.

The Thomas County Commissioners appointed the doctors during their meeting Monday.

Dr. LaDonna Regier of Colby Medical and Surgical Center was named the new emergency medical services advisor; Dr. Gary Slavens of Slavens Family Practice is the new county health officer and Dr. Bruce Kellogg from Family Center for Health Care is the county coroner.

Commissioner Chairman Ken Christiansen said the commissioners wanted to have someone from each clinic.

"We contacted each one of those to see if we could get someone to fill each position," Christiansen said. "We were able to spread it around and got all three represented."

Regier and Slavens will act as advisors.

Regier replaced Dr. Victor Hildyard.

Hildyard can no longer practice medicine in Kansas after having his medical license revoked in November. He also served as the county coroner at the same time.

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services Director Ken Gatlin said Hildyard was the advisor since the medical service's inception in the early 1970s.

Gatlin explained Regier is the medical advisor, but physician's assistant Brian Unruh will act as a liaison for Regier and the emergency medical services. Regier

will supervise Unruh. The medical director is a managerial position. The doctor handles quality assurance and reviews situations when an ambulance is needed.

Regier helps write protocols on how to handle different medical emergencies and offers advice when the medical technicians encounter problems on conditions they have not seen before.

Gatlin said he wanted someone from Colby Medical and Surgical Center to maintain the long relationship the emergency medical services has had with the county.

At the Thomas County Health Department, Slavens will be the county health officer. Slavens will offer advice to the department when needed.

Of the three, the county coroner receives the fewest calls.

A coroner investigates unattended or suspicious deaths.

"Usually that's about the only time they're called out," he said.



Dr. Regier



Dr. Slavens



Dr. Kellogg



FILE PHOTO

Educational booths featuring activities for children will be one of many activities at Saturday's Wellness Fair. Committee members

are concerned about the possibility of inclement weather, and encourage people to listen to the radio for updates.

Wellness Fair still planned Saturday

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

This year's Thomas County Wellness Fair maybe a little under the weather, literally.

The fair is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, in the student union at Colby Community College.

Organizers are concerned about the weather and should conditions continue to decline, said Diann Gerstner, committee member, cancellation of the fair will be publicized on local radio and television stations Saturday morning.

For those planning to attend,

many of the same kinds of booths and information will be available as in years past, she said.

"For only a \$5 fee," she said, "participants will be able to take advantage of many health screenings offered.

Those include fitness testing, including cardiovascular endurance, body fat analysis and flexibility; oral cancer screening; skin cancer screening; urinalysis; hearing screening; the Lions Club unit consisting of glaucoma/visual acuity/visual fields; non-fasting blood sugar/blood pressure; memory screen; lifestyle analysis; the children's area with many fun learning activities (child are admitted to

the fair free when accompanied by a registered adult) and immunization screening.

In addition, two feature presentations are being offered in the Fireside Lounge.

"The first presentation is at 10:30 a.m. by Midwest Transplant Network on anatomical donations and the second at 11:30 a.m. will be a 'Bal-A-Vis-X' by Brenda Mazanec of Colby," Gerstner said.

Committee members remind those who had lab work done this week results would not be available at the fair, but will be mailed to the participant.

For those who had lab work done prior to this week test result discus-

sions will be held at 9:15 a.m., 10:15 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. in room 106

Another highlight at this year's event will be discounted rates for osteoporosis screening, \$20, and colorectal cancer screening at \$5.

Coupons for mammograms and women's health examinations will be provided to fairgoers.

"Many health-related educational booths will be featured as well with young children and their families finding many opportunities to learn and have fun at the special booths focused on children," Gerstner said.



In today's edition

Unique Colby High School choir back on the stage

By John Van Nostrand

Free Press Publisher

Colby school choir director Joey Nickols is back for an encore in more ways than one.

Nickols, a 1998 graduate of Colby High, attended Colby Community College and Fort Hays State University before eventually returning to Colby to teach vocal music. This is his first year teaching full time at Colby.

"I was excited about coming home," he told the Colby Rotary group Tuesday.

But it is more for him than just teaching choir in the same place where he learned and performed choir.

Nickols has resurrected the Colby High School Singers, a select group of choir students who put on a different kind of show.

"The Singers have been gone for a while," he said. "And I remembered how much fun I had with it."

Nickols estimated the Singers had been performing for at least 10 years when he was part of the group in high school. The Singers continued for another couple of years after he graduated, but quit due to a variety of reasons from lack of student interest and schedule conflicts with teachers.



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Members of Colby High School's Singers group performed Tuesday during the Colby Rotary meeting. Director Joey Nickols, who had been in the group when he was a student at Colby High, has brought back the group after it stopped performing years ago.

Nickols advertised for auditions for the Singers. Twenty five students showed up and 15 were selected. Not only do the singers sing,

but have some choreography too.

"I look for students who want to learn more about different kinds of music styles," he said, "those who

want to sing and have a good time."

The Singers performed for the first time in December and have more performances and competi-

tions planned throughout the rest of the school year. The Singers performed during the Rotary meeting.

The members of the Singers introduced themselves and commented why they like the Singers. Some of the answers were related to how the group is like choir, but in a different setting.

"These students are doing an awesome job," he said. "They are having fun with it."

The Singers practice once a week in the evenings.

"I appreciate their dedication," Nickols said.

Nickols is hoping the group's popularity will grow so more students will audition in the future. Nickols said he is looking for a more catchy name for the group.

"The Singers is too generic," he said.

Singer members will help with the name of the group.

Nickols said the Singers is just one benefit he has teaching the arts in Colby schools.

"Teaching music is not about the money," he said. "It's about the joy I see in the faces."

Nickols is one of four people in Colby school's music department. His wife Jill instructs the band and other parts of the district's music department.

Governor unveils \$12.39 billion state budget proposal

TOPEKA (AP) — Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is proposing a \$12.39 billion state budget for the coming year that includes increases in higher education and social services and money for the second year of a three-year public schools plan.

Budget Director Duane Goossen told reporters Thursday that the budget includes several items the state must fund. "When you take out all of the have-to stuff, the increase is fairly modest," he said.

Goossen said the proposal does

not include money to expand health insurance coverage for all Kansans, although Sebelius said in her State of the State address Wednesday that Kansas should work toward "universal" health coverage of all residents. Under the proposed budget, the state would spend slightly more than \$6 billion in general fund revenue in 2008, an increase of \$429 million from the current budget year. The second year of the three-year school plan accounts for about \$200 million of the increase, includ-

ing \$15 million to begin a five-year implementation of all-day kindergarten.

The rest of the \$12.39 billion budget would come from federal funds.

Instead of a plan to cover all 293,000 Kansans without coverage, Sebelius is repeating a proposal from 2006 that the state provide coverage to all children from birth to age 5 at a cost of \$4 million to the state. Goossen said the governor was leaving it up to legislators and the Kansas Health Policy Authority

to figure out how to handle her health care challenge.

"Clearly, there are a lot of discussions ahead on that," said Goossen of the total health care picture. "It's an important step."

Legislative leaders were still digesting Sebelius' numbers.

"We will spend some time studying her funding suggestions before deciding whether her ideas are not only something Kansans can afford, but something they want from their state government," said House

Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls. Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt was disappointed in the budget, saying projections show the state could run through its current \$700 million in reserves in two years.

"I thought that we might have a more honest discussion about what it takes to responsibly govern the state," said Schmidt, R-Independence. "She's promised the moon, the stars and sun to anyone who looks up to the sky."

Congress ratings up

WASHINGTON (AP) — Public approval of Congress has edged up a bit now that Democrats are back in control, but it's still nothing to write home about.

Approval for the way Congress is handling its job rose to 32 percent in the latest AP-Ipsos poll, up from a meager 27 percent a month earlier. That puts Congress on par with President Bush, whose 32 percent approval rating represents a new low for him in AP-Ipsos polling.

The Democrats, led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, took control of Congress when the new session began on Jan. 4.

The softening of attitudes toward Congress suggests legislators may have an opportunity to improve their standing in the new year, but there appears to be little opening for Bush to move up similarly, public opinion experts believe.

"The question for Nancy Pelosi and Mr. Reid and the Democrats is whether they show the American public they can govern in a responsible way," said James Thurber, a political scientist at American University. Bush has less chance for improvement, Thurber said, because the unpopular war in Iraq is "the driving issue" in assessing his performance.