



COLBY FREE PRESS

Board names officers

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Compensation for judges working the Thomas County Free Fair is going up. The fair board approved raising the fee for a 4-H dog judge to \$100 per day, plus meals and mileage. Last year, that position paid \$50, plus mileage and meals.

The livestock judge fee will remain the same, \$100 per day and meals and mileage.

All other judges, including the round robin judges, will receive \$10 per hour.

Thomas County extension agent Doug Musick wanted guidelines on what the judges should be paid this year.

He said the animal judges deserve the pay because the judging is usually a full day commitment. In the case of the livestock judge, it requires two days.

In other business, Thomas County Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers, as well as county clerk Shelly Harms attended the meeting to elect new officers.

Mark Anderson was elected president.

He replaced Stan Strange. Board member Darrel Dible replaced Anderson as vice-president. The board welcomed new board member Tom Chain.

Chain, manager at Dillons, replaced Mark Miller who was asked to resign because of poor attendance.

The board also got a look at its latest equipment purchase.

Board member Nancy Rundel showed the board its new Dell laptop computer, purchased from S&T Communications for \$890. A printer was included for an additional \$100.

Rundel said the laptop will be used for the fairbook as well as keep track of all categories, entries and winners at the fair.

The board went into executive session for 15 minutes to discuss contract labor.

Back in open session, the board approved to pay John Tole \$10 an hour to set up the new computer as well as make changes to the fair book.

Storage for emergency supplies was also discussed.

The board talked briefly with the commissioners about using part of the solar building to store equipment from the emergency management department.

"I believe the board would be interested in working with you on that," Anderson said.

"It would need refurbishing."

Dible said the building's roof is metal. The floor is in good shape, but the outside of the building could use siding.



Anderson



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Brandi Lang, left, received help from Kelly Boo on the right way to wear bicycle safety gear during the Wellness Fair Saturday at the Colby Community College student Union.

Weather hinders fair turnout

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Attendance was down by about 200 people at this year's Thomas County Wellness Fair, but organizers said, considering the weather, the turnout wasn't bad.

About 120 people attending Saturday's event in the Colby Community College student union, said Diann Gerstner, publicity chair.

The committee, she said, debated on whether or not to hold the fair; however, everything was already in place and many of those having taken blood tests already had made plans to attend.

Blood work numbers were also down, she said.

"This year we had 408 participants for blood work (both weeks) and last year the number was about 580," she said today.

Gerstner said weather also played a big factor in the lower numbers.

"Overall, we were pleased with the turnout though," she said.

One of the major highlights this year, she said, was Brenda Mazanec's "Bal-A-Vis-X," which is short for balance, visual and exercise.

Mazanec, who is a physical education teacher at Colby Sacred Heart, uses this method with her students to help them stimulate their brain while providing better hand-eye coordination, Gerstner said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Calley Burr, left, and Rachel Van Eaton, center, learned about the proper way to care for their teeth from Jessica Spoo, right, Colby Community College dental hygiene student.

As in year's past, Colby Community College nursing students offered vision screenings and other activities to help young people understand the importance of hygiene and how the body works.

For those who had blood testing, results were available every hour with doctors providing explanations about the tests.

"We had a good variety of educa-

tional booths available," she said.

Each year, the fair is held in January providing residents an opportunity to evaluate wellness and screen for health problems in their early stages.

For questions about the fair or how to find out about participating next year, call Gerstner at 460-4582.

City council to discuss snowstorm

The impact of the snowstorm will be a major item on the Colby City Council's agenda when it meets at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the council chambers at City Hall, 585 N. Franklin.

A report on the New Year's Day weekend snowstorm will be discussed and updates on the damage to the fire station because of the collapsed roof, additional expense for snow removal efforts and Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance.

The council will also discuss a rental agreement with the Kansas Army National Guard regarding use of the armory to house the city's fire trucks.

The county's emergency man-

agement director, Jim Engel, received a letter from the Adjutant General's office in Topeka about the armory. The city will have to sign a rental agreement to use the building.

Another discussion will be held on untagged vehicles within city limits. City manager Carolyn Armstrong has in the past talked about untagged vehicles and what the city can do to have them removed from private property.

Other agenda items include approval of declaration for participation in the firefighters relief fund for 2007 and approval of seven small, privately-owned hangar leases.

For questions or an agenda, call 460-4410.

Area businesses ponder merger

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Board members of two area grain businesses hope to join forces next month. An intent of merger and consolidation is in the works for Frontier Equity of Goodland and CO-AG, Inc. of Oakley.

"I think it's an excellent idea," said Brent Linin, board president of Frontier Equity. "It will spread our risk and make our companies stronger."

Both companies conduct annual audits. Following an independent audit conducted by Lindburg & Vogel of Hays, board members of both grain companies decided a merger would better utilize the capital expenditure money, continue cooperative ownership and control of its members' equity, and a host of other matters pertaining to both entities.

With the fiscal year of the cooperative to end Feb. 28, the merger is expected to take place March 1.

Brian Linin, chief financial officer of Frontier Equity said according to merger documents which resulted from the audit, Frontier Equity had \$54 million dollars in business and CO-AG did \$50 million dollars in business in 2006.

Frontier Equity has 90 employees and CO-AG has 65 employees. After Stan Stark left the position of general manager of CO-AG in September, former general manager Bill Kuhlman in October assumed that role.

Stark and Kuhlman started CO-AG Inc. in 1994, and Kuhlman said when Stark left he thought it was time to look at a merger with Frontier Equity. It was at Kuhlman's urging CO-AG board members approach Frontier Equity, and he said he is pleased the employees are supporting of the action to merge.

"It's been well received by the employees as the new hope for the future," Kuhlman said. "And I enthusiastically support this because I think it's the way of the future for a cooperative presence in northwest Kansas."

Kuhlman said he knows of at least 12 employees who, on their own time, have gone out into the local and rural communities to talk with residents about the merger and their support of it.

"I think it will pass and all we need to do is make sure the people who are for it show up and vote," he said. An informational meeting about the merger will take place at 6 p.m. on Jan. 29 at the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center located at 703 W Second Street in Oakley. A second meeting will take place from 6 p.m. MST Jan. 31 at the Goodland Elks Lodge located at

1523 Arcade. Voting will take place from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Feb. 7 at the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center in Oakley, and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Mountain time at the Elks Lodge in Goodland.

Both Frontier Equity and CO-AG have developed as businesses through previous mergers. Frontier started as Goodland Co-op, and then merged with cooperatives in Brewster and Bird City in the 1990s. The petroleum cooperative in Atwood was added on July 1, 2006.

CO-AG, since its beginning, has merged with cooperatives in Grinnell, Menlo and Rexford, and in 1998 added Mingo Grain Cooperative to its portfolio. Besides the like services offered by both companies, CO-AG in Oakley offers computerized grain marketing and aerial crop spraying. Frontier Equity has elevators in Goodland, Ruleton, Bird City and Brewster, and fertilizer operations in Atwood, Bird City and McDonald. CO-AG has elevators in Brenton, Grinnell, Menlo, Mingo, Page City, Sequin, Winona and Oakley. Linin said both companies offer grain storage and sales, fertilizers, chemicals, custom application, seed, feed, petroleum and shop facilities to their customers.

CO-AG Inc. board member Murray Baalman supports the merger.

"It's good for the company," he said. "That's the reason it was initiated."

Brent Linin said the merger is even a good thing for both companies when it comes to logistics.

"Actually, we have looked at this thing on a map and the two companies come together and pretty much cover northwest Kansas," he said. "Both CO-AG and Frontier overlap into the Colby area, and we both sell fertilizer and that is good." Baalman also supports the merger for logistic reason.

They companies come up against each other and it will be good for both companies," he said.

Through the merger, the two boards have decided to join forces. Currently having nine board members each, the merger will create a board of 14 members – five from Frontier and five from CO-AG, with two associate members from each current board. Current board members of Frontier Equity are Tim Livengood, Albert Rall, Alan Townsend, Kenny Davis, John Deeds, Gordon Hawkins, Ted Zielke, Larry Gutsch, and Linin. Current board members of CO-AG are Richard Epard, Robert Abell, Harold Koster, Mark Myers, Victor Schwarz, Joe McInay, Mike Stephens, Dennis Engel and Baalman.

King's oldest daughter helps honor parents

ATLANTA (AP) — On the first holiday celebrating the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. since the death of Coretta Scott King, their eldest daughter urged Americans to be forces for peace and love.

"We must keep reaching across the table and, in the tradition of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, feed each other," Yolanda King said during a presentation Sunday at Ebenezer Baptist Church that was part motivational speech, part drama.

King, 51, told The Associated Press the King holiday provides an opportunity for everyone to live her father's dream, and that she has her mother's example to follow.

"I connected with her spirit so strongly," Yolanda King said when asked how she is coping with her mother's loss. "I am in direct contact with her spirit, and that has given me so much peace and so much strength."

The stage and television actress performed a series of scenes that told stories including a girl's first ride on a desegregated bus and a college student's recollection of the 1963 desegregation of Birmingham, Ala.

After the performance — attended by members of the extended King family and Yolanda's sister, the Rev. Bernice King — Yolanda King and her aunt, Christine King

Farris, signed copies of their books, and Bernice King posed for photographs with attendees.

On Monday, Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King preached from 1960 to 1968, was to be the venue for more remembrances and speeches.

The keynote speaker was to be Dr. Otis Moss Sr., pastor of Olivet Institutional Baptist Church.

In New York, rallies, speeches and volunteer efforts were to mark the King holiday, some invoking the Iraq War, the conflict in Sudan and local tensions surrounding the fatal police shooting of a black groom.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the

Rev. Al Sharpton and Gov. Eliot Spitzer were expected to attend a forum, joining Nicole Paultre-Bell, whose fiancée was killed by police in a barrage of 50 bullets in November.

The Rev. Herbert Daughtry, the national minister of the House of the Lord Churches, said he would lead an act of civil disobedience outside the Sudan Mission in New York. New Yorkers also planned to volunteer on the holiday in a spirit of service, such as knitting blankets for babies born to mothers with HIV/AIDS, painting murals, building homes, revitalizing their community and making fleece scarves for the homeless.