



# Spic and Span

## Cleanup Week important to town's image says those in the tourism, travel industry

By John Van Nostrand  
*Colby Free Press Publisher*

This time of year, it's common for people to clean out their closets and junk drawers in the spirit of spring cleaning.

But the city of Colby and Thomas County are encouraging people to also consider items outside of their house like lawns, garages and workshops. Beginning today and lasting through the week, is Cleanup Week in Thomas County.

Colby Mayor Ken Bieber encourages residents to remove inoperable vehicles and other items from their property. He also encourages residents to at least limit weed growth, if weeds can't be removed.

Typical garbage and weeds will be collected by the city during their regularly scheduled garbage collection dates and routes.

"Trash should be boxed or bagged and placed at the street," said Chris Bieker, Colby Public Utilities Director.

Picking up garbage and limiting weed growth leaves an impression on people who pass through town, said Ralph Fischer. Fischer coordinates the Colby Visitor's Center near Interstate 70 exit 53.

"There is no need to have a building like this to have it look bad on the outside," Fischer said. "We do receive compliments on our landscape and yard. Keeping this place clean is a big part of operations of this facility."

The visitor's center offers a variety of tourist-related information about Northwest Kansas and the entire state, all in air-conditioned comfort.

Fischer said he is proud of what he and his volunteers do to keep the center clean knowing the surroundings and the occasional gust of western Kansas wind.

"We see where the trash comes from, McDonald's, Burger King, Taco John's, Subway," he said. "It's not the fault of McDonald's, Taco John's and the others. It's the people who pitch that stuff out their windows. People form an opinion about what they see while here."



COLBY FREE PRESS FILE PHOTO

This unidentified youth picks up trash on the south side of Colby during a clean up day held last month. This week is Cleanup Week for Colby and Thomas County. Those who need help with large items to be disposed of can call 460-4410.

Colby businessman Mike Woofter, who owns some of those tourist-related places in Colby, agrees with Fischer. Woofter's signature business is the Oasis Travel Center, also off of exit 53. The Oasis sells gasoline, food, snacks, gifts and other items to the hundreds of people who stop daily.

"It's real important to have a clean looking town," he said. "And it's real important to our business."

Like Fischer, Woofter said the evidence is obvious.

"The thing we look at is who's trash is it," he said. "And the wind is one of the problems too. People make the nice comments when it's clean."

Woofter, who as been in the business of serving customers for about 23 years, said the battle of picking up garbage is ongoing. Even though summer is traditionally the most popular tourist time, he said one season is not worse than another.

"Of course when it snows, it's all covered up," he said.

Woofter donated funds to the local Boy Scout troops which participated in a cleanup effort on the south side of Colby last month. Various streets near Interstate 70 were cleared of garbage and other debris by the troops, Colby Rotary Club members and others.

Woofter said that kind of effort reminds him of the challenges at his

businesses.

"We need somebody full time. The problem is cleaning up our parking lot. It's tough to see somebody clean out their car in our parking lot. It's hard to see that happen."

Fischer said efforts of all of those who try to keep Colby and Thomas County as neat as possible do pay off.

He said it's common for people to return to the visitor's center and remember what it was like the first time they visited, sometimes years ago.

"People who have been here before say, 'Colby looks like a nice, little town,'" Fischer said. "And I say, 'Yes, it is.'"

## With summer approaching, so do the jobs

By Tisha Cox  
*Colby Free Press*

Need something to do during summer break?

Summer jobs are available through the city of Colby and through the state's Colby Workforce Center. Ryan Sturdy, recreation director for the city, said they have a variety of summer jobs for students.

"Every year we're always looking for concession workers and score keepers at the ball fields," he said.

The jobs are for students aged 14 and up.

Younger students fit the score keeping and concession jobs, but Sturdy said they also need umpires.

"Those jobs are ideal for high school or college students," he said.

There are two games a night, Sunday through Thursday, beginning the first week in June and running through the last weekend in July.

Schedules are flexible, and the city schedules work around the available pool of workers. That way they can allow for kids playing summer ball or take family vacations.

"That's the advantage of working for us," he said.

There is no prerequisite for the jobs. Although for the umpire jobs, having played baseball or softball or having a knowledge of the game helps.

"Having a lower age limit for certain jobs gives younger kids an opportunity since there are not that many jobs available for that age group. This gets their foot in the door," Sturdy said. "It teaches them responsibility."

The recreation department is also taking applications for lifeguards at the city pool. Applicants must be at least 15 years old and be lifeguard instructor certified.

Students can apply at the recreation office at 285 E. Fifth St. Information is also available by calling 460-4440 or online at

**“We have more jobs listed now than we’ve had in quite some time.”**

Linda Groff,  
local supervisor, job  
placement specialist  
Colby Workforce Center

[www.cityofcolby.com/](http://www.cityofcolby.com/).

Linda Groff, local supervisor and job placement specialist with the Colby Workforce Center, said her office has many jobs available now.

Some are harvest or elevator jobs.

"We always have harvest jobs," she said. "We have a lot of elevator jobs also. They pay well."

Some of them pay \$8 to \$9 an hour.

Food service jobs are another option.

She also has listings in Atwood and the area.

"We have more jobs listed now than we've had in quite some time," Groff said.

To apply, she said students need to register at [www.kansasjoblink.com](http://www.kansasjoblink.com). There, they can build an online resume for employers to review.

The site also offers links to other job sites.

They can also drop by the office at 1135 S. Country Club Drive to look at postings and get resume help. The office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For information, call 785-462-6862.

# Hoxie dedicates refurbished park

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
*Colby Free Press*

Friends, family and well-wishers gathered Saturday in Hoxie to honor of one of the county's fallen officials.

The late Sheriff James "Jimmy" Johnson, an 18-year veteran law enforcement officer, was killed in the line of duty in October 2006.

Two local women took on the challenge of updating one of the city parks' equipment as a way to honor him.

The park was dedicated Saturday. "What is notable about Sheriff Johnson's life is not how he died, but how he lived," said Sheridan County Sheriff Brian Fenner, the undersheriff appointed to fill Johnson's unexpired term.

Following Johnson's death, Michelle Foote and Lola Baalman researched playground equipment and meet with company representatives before talking with city officials about their dream for an updated Kiddie Park as a way to pay their respects to Johnson and help area children.

Located at the corner of Noble Avenue and 14th Street, the park is owned by the city; however, the local Rotary Club maintains it except for mowing.

In just under six weeks late last year, Foote and Baalman raised almost \$40,000 of the \$80,000 project.

The city of Hoxie put up the balance of the money.

Area volunteers installed the playground equipment and picnic area components in March and April.

Mayor Lori Horesky and Commissioners Jim Irwin and Troy Dewey approved renaming the park. They and Johnson's wife, Linda, were on hand for the ceremony.

The new play equipment is American Disability Approved and all approaches to the equipment are wheelchair accessible.

Also at the park was Rep. Jim Morrison of Colby. Morrison said Johnson "gave his life" for his community.

Baalman read letters from well-wishers, including Gov. Kathleen Sebelius who was not able to attend. Lisa Dethloff, a district representative from Congressman Jerry Moran's office in Hays, expressed Moran's appreciation of the park's renaming.

Following a balloon launch and ribbon cutting, those attending the ceremony were treated to a barbecue lunch.



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

A new sign and gate welcome visitors to the James L. Johnson Memorial Park, formerly known as the Kiddie Park. An \$80,000 renovation project concluded Saturday with the park being reopened to the public after a dedication ceremony. James L. "Jimmy" Johnson had served Sheridan County as sheriff for 18 years before being killed in the line of duty in October.

## Legislature leaves job half-done

TOPEKA (AP) — Searching for a phrase when an unprintably more colorful one seemed apt, Senate President Steve Morris settled on "half-baked" to describe the plan legislators passed to fix crumbling higher education buildings.

To some of Morris' colleagues and other Kansans, it might seem a strange way to characterize a plan worth \$380 million over the next five years, including \$50 million during the fiscal year beginning July 1.

But the plan, as big as it is, doesn't match the twin problems outlined by state university officials before this year's legislative session convened.

The Board of Regents, which oversees higher education, said state universities have a \$663 million backlog of repair projects and were \$69 million a year short of having enough money for campus maintenance. That represents a \$1 billion problem over five years.

And it means the regents expect to be back next year, pressing for more and probably getting a sympathetic ear from Morris and some other legislators, as well as Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

"The plan we passed will probably get them by the next couple of years," Morris, R-Hugoton, said.