



COLBY FREE PRESS

Truck stop talk continues

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Colby City Council members will continue discussing extension of water and sewer service to the proposed Bosselman's Truck Center when it meets at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in council chambers.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said she and other staff members met with Bosselman's contractors recently to go over plans on existing utilities and water pressure at the site off Interstate 70 at exit 54.

The council will also be discussing the buildings and land at 225 and 245 S. Range Ave. and 840 W. Webster, which is owned by Dr. Victor Hildyard and other investors.

The code enforcement officer, Rick Dickman, will have an environmental code violation report and the council could act on those properties, Armstrong said.

Other agenda items include the city's 2006 audit by Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball; an investment grade audit of the city's utilities; discussion of the municipal code; and approval of the lease extension with American Tower.

In addition, the council will be meeting with the recreation commission and baseball association about replacement of light pole and fixture on the K-18/Legion field at a cost of \$5,684.

According to Armstrong, the joint meeting will be in reviewing responsibilities, duties and privileges on those fields between the various entities.

All meetings are open to the public. For questions, call 460-4410.

Standing out in a crowd



MICHELLE MYERS/Colby Free Press

More than 70 children are attending this year's Colby United Methodist Church Vacation Bible School at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. The theme, "Faith Riders Round-Up" includes

tours and exhibits within the main building, outdoor facilities and low-rope team building activities. The school continues all week at the museum.

Veteran staffer retires

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

After 25 years with the Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services office in Colby, Sandra Owen, 63, is retiring due to medical reasons.

Recognizing her many years of service and commitment, the staff held a reception for her Friday. In honor of her time, the staff gave her a large novelty shelf to house her ceramic teddy bears.

"I am really going to miss the clients and staff," she said today. "I started in 1981 as a clerk typist and held various job titles since then, along with moving three times."

When Owen started working for the state in September 1981, the office was at 155 W. Third St. About six months later, the office moved to 180 W. Fifth St. Almost two years ago, the offices relocated to a new facility at 1135 S. Country Club Dr.

Location has not been the only change. One of the biggest changes Owen recalls from her 25-years as a human service assistant was computers.

"We didn't use computers a lot when I first started, but by 1985-86 computers were a big part of the job," she said.

So much of her job requires confidentiality that Owen said she cannot talk in specifics, but that she helped clients with filling out applications for food stamps and other related paperwork.

Since Owen's health forced her to retire sooner than she wanted, she hopes to find something that she can do from home.

"I am on oxygen 24-7, but I still want to work," she said.

She also plans to continue collecting her bears, which support breast cancer awareness since many friends and relatives have died from that disease.

When possible, she also said she plans to do some traveling.

"I have children in Texas and Georgia and many nieces and nephews right here in Colby," she said.

Although it was hard saying goodbye to her co-workers and friends, Owen said she plans on making the most of the situation.

In addition to the novelty shelf, she said she also received a certificate and letter from Don Jordan, director.



Owen

Dog killer settles out of Sheridan County court

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A Sheridan County criminal case that caught the attention of an animal protection organization has been settled out of court.

Gary Niermeier of Hoxie entered into a one-year diversion agreement and admits killing a 3-and one-half year old German Shepard mix Oct. 15, 2006.

The dog was owned by Corina Knoll of Hoxie. According to a statement signed by Niermeier that is part of the court record, Niermeier admits to having entered a residence owned by Dave Adams of rural Sheridan County and "injected two cc of Micoitol, a drug to treat sick cattle, into Corina Knoll's dog around midnight or after and then left to go home."

Knoll alleges Niermeier killed her dog as part of a domestic dispute.

"We were hoping, if there were a conviction in this case, given the malicious nature of his alleged action, we wanted to see the defendant prohibited from contact with all animals and to have any animal that remains in his custody removed," said Stephanie Bell of the Norfolk, Va., based animal protection group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Bell said Niermeier is a cattle rancher and should not have a reason to allow animals to remain in his custody. She said removing animals from the custody of people who have admitted hurting an animal is the most effective way of protecting animals.

"Research shows that people

who get away with violent acts toward animals usually don't stop there," Bell said. "That's one of the reasons we believe cases like this need to be taken very seriously."

According to court documents filed June 13 in Sheridan County District Court, Niermeier waived his right to a jury trial and has been ordered to pay for and attend anger management classes; pay restitution to Knoll in the amount of \$250; pay a diversion fee and court costs in the amount of \$228; refrain from violating any city, state or federal laws; and report to Sheridan County Attorney Mike Haas' office once a month to verify the well-being of his animals.

Bell said animal rights officials are pleased to see anger management courses have been included in the diversion agreement, but dis-

pointed the agreement stopped there.

"We were really hoping to see a thorough psychological evaluation followed by mandatory counseling, to address whatever issues (Mr. Niermeier) may have," Bell said.

"Animal abusers are cowards who take their issues out on the most defenseless beings available to them."

In lieu of a fine, Niermeier has been ordered to make monthly donations of \$30 to the Kansas Humane Society in Wichita for the next 36 months. Knoll said she was allowed to have input into the outcome of the case and Niermeier's requirement to donate money to the humane society.

"I wanted something to be done in Shawnte's name," Knoll said of her dog.

Grazing conditions in Thomas County better than last year

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Last summer, drought conditions forced cattle producers to find other ways to feed their herds. Federal Conservation Reserve Program land was opened for grazing.

This year, that might not be the case

Andy Burr with the Natural Resources Conservation Service said rangeland conditions look good so far.

"They're better than last year at the same time," he said.

Last year, dry conditions forced grass to go dormant. By late summer, much of it browned and stopped growing.

Rangeland use and rest are the best indicators of condition. The reserve program allows farmers to take land not ideal for crops and plant native grass. Farmers are paid up to \$35 an acre for land in the program.

In 2006, farmers could sign up to graze or hay their land in the reserve program.

Continuous grazing is hard on

grass' root system, making it drought tolerant. However, with a little rest and proper stocking rates, land can bounce back.

Cheyenne, Wallace, Gove, Sherman and Logan counties have more rangeland than Thomas County.

Thomas County does have pasture used for grazing, mainly along its creek systems.

"There's more flat, farmable ground around Thomas County," he said.

Grasses common to the area are buffalo, blue grama, little bluestem, western wheatgrass, switchgrass, sideoats grama, and some big bluestem. Conservation Reserve Program grass opened for grazing last year is recovering well. Not normally grazed, it has a deep root system, allowing it to stay healthy and strong.

Better conditions would help improve range, along with moisture, proper stocking rates and rest.

Two types of grass prevail. They are cool and warm season grasses.

The only cool season grass here is western wheatgrass. Early in the season, it is tender but as it warms up, it becomes rigid and less palatable. Later, it becomes more palatable again. All the rest are warm season grasses that grow through June, July and August.

Spring moisture should lead to higher production from those grasses. Leland Wilson runs cattle, mainly yearling stockers, on pasture within 20 miles of Colby. He normally has 500-600 cattle on pasture. He said snow and rain have helped improve grass condition.

"It's better this year," Wilson said. "Naturally the grass a lot better. It has a good start."

Last year, he did not run as many cattle because of the dry conditions.

Even if forage doesn't get any rain this summer, it could hold on until July or August.

"It will still be in good shape," he said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Cattle stood in a field north of Colby today. Grazing conditions around the county have improved over last year, with moisture from snow during the winter and rain this spring.