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COLBY FREE PRESS

What's your color?

*County landfill
giving away
unwanted paint*

By Jan Katz Ackerman
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Thomas County Landfill Director Larry Jumper has paint to give away to the public.

"We've got about 150 gallons of good paint to be given away," Jumper told Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers Monday.

Jumper said the county obtained the paint as part of the hazardous materials received at the landfill. He said the paint has been evaluated to make sure it is usable and is available in 5-gallon buckets with each color noted on the lid.

"They are in to be given away in 15 gallon increments of one color," Jumper said. "There are 15 gallons of white, 15 gallons of green, 15 in earth tones and they are all labeled so someone doesn't pick up different colors and start to paint and have different colors."

Anyone wanting to take advantage of the free paint can contact Jumper at (785) 460-8139.

"I think this is the fruition of a lot of hard work," Steele said. "I'm not sure the public would want to go to an open house at the landfill, but they are certainly welcome to go see the new building."

In 2005, commissioners and Jumper began planning a building at the landfill to isolate hazardous materials from other wastes taken in at the site. That building became operational in early 2007.

"I'm sure they'll come out for free paint," Jumper joked.

Also on the topic of hazardous materials, Steele asked Jumper about the disposing of volatile materials. Volatile materials include, but are not limited to, oil-based paints, paint thinners, kerosene and solvents.

"We contract with a company called Clean Harbors out of Nebraska," Jumper said. "The company takes volatile items to Nebraska and incinerates them."

During the month of January, Jumper and his crew at the landfill took in 426.8 ton of waste materials. That total averaged out to 13.77 ton of household waste per day.

*Colby High
regional
wrestling
inside!*



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Bev Biel, Pat Parker and Kay Frederick leave plates of cookies and other treats on a table Tuesday for the Colby Fire Department, temporarily housed within the National Guard Armory building. The women represent the Lutheran Women Mission League and the food is a way to show appreciation for what the fire department does.

Thomas, Sheridan counties may share emergency manager

By Jan Katz Ackerman
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Thomas County officials are considering entering into a cooperative agreement with Sheridan County for emergency management services.

Thomas County Commissioner Paul Steele said Sheridan County Commissioner Doyle Kauk approached him last week about the possibility of contracting with Thomas County in order to have an emergency management director.

Following the resignation of Selden resident Jacque Boultinghouse late last year, Sheridan County has advertised for a new director. Also mayor and business owner in Selden, Boultinghouse agreed to remain the director until her replacement was found, but that has yet to happen.

"We've had several applications come in," Sheridan County Clerk Paula Bielser said. "But when they find out about all the classes

that are required, that's where it stops."

Bielser said Sheridan County Commissioners Keith Kennedy, Ron Schamberger and Kauk talked about a cooperative agreement with Thomas County at their meeting Monday.

Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan took over the reins after Jim Engle vacated the slot. On staff since Feb. 1, McMahan said she knows of five classes she will have to take in the near future as part of the credentials required by the state.

Steele said his conversation with Kauk resulted in the idea of sharing McMahan's salary should the agreement take place. Currently, Thomas County is paying McMahan \$32,500. Sheridan County budgets \$19,500 for its emergency management director position.

"I know Mr. Engle was moving in the direction of regionalization of emergency management services," Steele said. "We'll have to decide whether or not to do this."

"My concern with it would be who would have priority during an emergency," McMahan said. "I can not physically be in two places at once."

"I would not make that a deal killer," Steele said. "The percentage of probability of having two emergencies at one time is low. Our neighbors to the east are nice folks and at least we owe them the courtesy to respond to their inquiry."

Cooperative agreements between counties for emergency management services are not new. Logan and Gove counties work under such an agreement, as do Cheyenne, Rawlins and Sherman counties.

Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms told the commissioners she would contact Logan and Gove counties and ask for details about their joint venture. McMahan will contact the other three counties and get similar data. Both Harms and McMahan will report their findings to the commissioners at 9 a.m. Feb. 19.

State claims county broke meeting law

By Jan Katz Ackerman
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Thomas County Commissioners have an opportunity avoiding prosecution for two Sunshine Law violations which took place Dec. 28, 2007.

Sunshine Law is the slang term for the Kansas Open Meetings and Open Records Acts which open government activities to the public so binding actions are not taken outside the public's awareness.

Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers have until March 5 to accept a settlement agreement offered by the Kansas Attorney General's Office. Assistant Attorney General Michael J. Smith, in a letter dated Feb. 4, told Thomas County Attorney Andrea Wyrick the commissioners violated the Open Meetings Act by "discussing a salary plan that covered all non-elected county employees behind closed doors."

Smith said a second violation took place when the commissioners failed to open the doors when they said they would.

Smith is giving Christiansen, Steele and Sowers six months to obtain one and one-half hour training on the provisions of the KOMA, according to the settlement agreement. The training must be paid for out of each commissioner's own pocket, not county money.

In addition to getting training about the Kansas Open Meetings Act, the commissioners must not violation the act in the future. Should they do so, the agreement would be nullified and they could face prosecution. The terms of the settlement agreement does not apply to future or currently unknown commissioner conduct which could be filed with Attorney General Stephen Six's Office in Topeka.

According to the act, any member of a body or agency who knowingly violates any of the

provisions of it or intentionally fails to furnish information as required by it shall be liable for the payment of a civil penalty of not more than \$500 for each violation. Smith said the state is offering the commissioners the opportunity to enter into the agreement as a way to avoid expending "additional time and resources on this matter."

While Christiansen and Sowers appeared ready to sign off on the agreement on Monday, Steele was not.

"I have not had time to review the letter," Steele said, wanting to wait until the Feb. 19 meeting to make a decision about signing the agreement.

As previously reported, the 20 minute executive session came under fire when Colby Free Press Reporter Kevin Johnson questioned whether a formal motion about the closed door session took place during the Dec. 28 meeting.

Despite paperwork on file in Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms' office which says a motion passed unanimously, the public and press were not allowed back in the meeting until 10:06 a.m., six minutes after the time allotted.

Besides the commissioners, those meeting for non-elected personnel matters were Road and Bridge Supervisor Clair Schrock, Landfill Supervisor Larry Jumper, Emergency Medical Service Director Ken Gatlin, Undersheriff Allen Marcum, Sheriff Mike Baughn, Register of Deeds Maybelle Moore and County Clerk Shelly Harms. Baughn, Moore and Harms are elected officials, all three of which do not qualify as non-elected personnel.

Colby Free Press Editor Patty Decker contacted the Attorney General's office after Johnson reported his suspicion the commissioners violated the act. Steele was the only one of the three commissioners who believed the executive session was inappropriate, according to Decker's complaint filed with the state.

Employees receive equal pay

By Jan Katz Ackerman
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Thomas County Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers approved to equal the pay of two health department employees Monday, requested by department head Lisa Molstad.

Molstad said despite Kathy Ryan and Connie Walden having both been with the department for 10 years, Ryan makes 48 cents more than Walden. Walden has a bachelor's degree in nursing, Ryan has only an associate's degree.

Ryan is paid \$20.36 an hour and Walden is paid \$19.88 an hour. Molstad said the state average for new nurses ranges from \$20 to \$21 per hour, which does not account for Ryan and Walden's years of experience. Both will receive \$20.36 an hour.

"I believe I've done as much administrative duties as Kathy," Walden said.

Molstad said she talked with Ryan about her plan to ask for a raise for Walden because they basically have "the same job description and do the same amount of work."

Briefly

Landfill closed Feb. 18

The Thomas County Landfill will be closed Monday in observance of Presidents' Day.

Lent lunch offered

Weekly Brown Bag and Scripture events will be held a noon Wednesdays during Lent at First Baptist Church, 615 W. Webster.

Feb. 13: For My Sake

Feb. 20: A Life Spent for Me

Feb. 27: Why?

March 5: A Murderer They Save

March 12: No House, No Home

The meals are brown-bag. Desserts and coffee are furnished. A free-will offering will be taken for the Thomas County Ministerial Association Transient Fund. For more information, call 462-3497.

Soups benefits preschool

Kappa Upsilon, a local service group, is sponsoring a soup supper from 5-7:30 p.m. Friday at the Colby Community Building during the Colby vs. Rawlins County basketball games. Chili, chicken-noodle soup, vegetable-beef soup, cinnamon rolls and cookies will be served for a free-will offering. Proceeds benefit Puddle Duck Preschool.

Pancakes benefit baseball

A pancake feed from 7-1 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building will benefit the American Legion Baseball program.

Free-will donations will be accepted.

Nice touch

Go to www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com

com and click on the line of look who's participating in Thomas County's Random Acts of Kindness. It will take you to a place where staff has listed some of the known kind acts in the community. Random Acts of Kindness is this week.

Tax help available

Senior citizens and low income individuals or families are encouraged to have their taxes done free of charge by an AARP representative. Alvin Volk of Colby is trained in helping fill out tax forms and is available from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., Thursdays, at Pioneer Memorial Library. Volk will help each Thursday through April 10. For questions, call 460-2645.

Daffodils help society

American Cancer Daffodil Days is coming and

orders may be placed until Thursday, Feb. 21. The daffodils will be delivered to Someplace Special in Colby around the first week in March, said Cathy Harrison, coordinating the event. Prices range from a bunch for \$10 to bouquet with vase, \$15. In addition, there is a "Bear and A Bunch," for \$25 and one-half and full cases of daffodils from \$250-\$400. For questions or to order, call Harrison at 460-2501; 462-2331; fax: 462-6242 or e-mail: harrison@st-tel.net

Valentine's party at center

At 11 a.m. Thursday, a Valentine's Day party will be held at Senior Progress Center.

A card party, open to the public, will be held Feb. 21. The February birthday party will be held Feb. 27. Young at Heart will be Feb. 29.

Daily luncheons for those 60 and older are available at the center. Call 460-2901 for reservations.