



10 pages

COLBY FREE PRESS

50¢

Wednesday

April 23, 2008

Volume 119, Number 66

Serving Thomas County since 1888

Taking center stage



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

The Colby Grade School Soaring Singers entertained family and friends Tuesday in the school's auditorium. The children in grades first through fifth sang again today for those unable to make the concert Tuesday.

School code challenged

By Joey Falkoff

Free Press Reporter
jalkoff@nwkansas.com

“They let people have tattoos and show them.”

Danni Baker,
Colby High School junior

Colby High junior Danni Baker bought her first nose ring over the holiday break and was excited to show it off to her friends when she arrived back at school this semester.

But shortly after she entered the high school commons, Baker was stopped by a school official and asked to remove her newly purchased facial piercing.

Shocked at first, Baker scurried for a student handbook, and the bad news soon followed.

“They let people have tattoos and show them. I figured why not facial piercings,” she said. “I looked at my school planner, and low and behold it says facial piercings aren’t allowed.”

On page 37 of Colby High School’s student handbook, it states explicitly under the school dress code, ‘facial piercings other than earrings are not allowed.’

It’s a rule that caught Baker by surprise at the time and has continued to bother her ever since.

In the last three months, she says she has talked to Colby High principal Rocky Robbins on multiple occasions, but to no avail.

“I’ve talked to him in his office, during lunch breaks and in the hallway,” said Baker. “He’s not happy about it. He says it goes against his core morals.”

Tired of pleading with Robbins about the issue, Baker took her fight to the board Monday.

Joined by her mom, Tre, Baker spoke to the board for nearly 10 minutes about why facial piercings should be allowed in Colby public schools.

“Facial piercings are becoming more acceptable,” she said. “I’m seeing them a lot more in public. There are teachers and people that work at the hospital that wear them. You can say it’s distracting, but not any more so than neon green, purple or blue hair.”

Her mom chimed in as well and added that the distraction is in the rule itself.

“It’s more distracting to tell a kid they can’t do it, because then they’re all up in arms about it,” said Tre.

“It’s distracting at my house to hear the noise about having to take them in and out. Keep it small and keep it reasonable.”

Baker also noted the difficulties of having to constantly take piercings in and out.

“It’s a hassle,” she said. “It’s uncomfortable and makes it more likely for infections to occur.”

Baker told the board she understood ‘eight facial piercings is unprofessional,’ but a certain limit or certain type of ring should be allowed.

“If you just allowed clear or flesh-colored piercings that would work for me,” said Baker. “They’re not hard to get. Maybe restrict a number of facial piercings. I don’t see one facial piercing being that bad looking.”

Baker was wearing her clear colored nose ring while she spoke to the board. To prove her point,

she asked board president Tracy Rogers if he was distracted by it.

Rogers responded by saying he couldn’t even tell she had it in.

“It’s funny they say it’s distracting when I had mine in and they couldn’t see it,” said Baker.

No administrators spoke up on the matter, but the concern with a number restriction would seem to be the time it would take to count the number of piercings on each student. However, Baker doesn’t see that as an issue.

“That’s ridiculous,” she said. “If they allowed one or two, it would not be that time consuming. Obviously, if a person did have more than one or two or a snakebite that would be easy to tell.”

Rogers and Gerry Fulwider were the only two board members to comment on the matter.

After initially questioning the merits of having a number restriction, Fulwider admitted facial piercings ‘don’t bother me.’

Rogers had no opinion on the subject, but concluded the discussion by saying, “It’s something we’ll consider for next year.”

If history is an indicator, though, it doesn’t appear likely the rule will get changed.

“I have a teacher (Joey Nickols) who said they’ve been trying to get them allowed before he was in school,” said Baker.

Nickols, who graduated from Colby High in 1998, also told her that recently no one has brought the issue to the forefront.

Despite past failures in getting the rule overturned, this is a battle Baker doesn’t plan on giving up. Baker said she plans on attending the next board meeting May 25. In the mean time, she plans on calling other area schools to research their policies on facial piercings.

“This is definitely a big thing,” said Baker. “A lot of kids get their nose pierced during the summer, especially freshmen, and they don’t know the rules. It’s just such a hassle to take them out all the time. I have four friends who all got their noses pierced, and I’m the only one that still has mine in. A lot more people would wear them if this rule didn’t exist.”

Time is of the essence for Baker, who graduates next May. Before she does so, Baker is determined to leave a legacy that allows Eagle students to leave their piercings in throughout the day.

“You gotta accomplish something your senior year,” said Baker.

Commissioners support sheriff

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Free Press Reporter
jkackerman@gmail.com

Thomas County Commissioners on Monday supported the sheriff’s position the county is not responsible for transporting mentally ill individuals in every situation that arises.

Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn told Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers state law does not require his office to transport people to mental health facilities unless ordered to do so by the court.

However, he said if a mentally ill person is booked into jail on county charges his office is required to bear the costs of transporting the person.

“I had said about a year ago that I was no longer going to transport for the city,” Baughn said.

Baughn provided the commis-

“I had said about a year ago that I was no longer going to transport for the city.”

Mike Baughn,
Thomas County Sheriff

sioners a copy of an attorney general’s opinion issued by Attorney General Stephen Six and Assistant Attorney General Michael Smith, Baughn the City of Colby is responsible for transporting people being detained by the Colby Police Department or those in jail for municipal charges.

Steele asked Baughn whether individuals who are taken to Citizens Medical Center for mental evaluation are the responsibility of the county if turned over to his office.

“No,” Baughn said. “Not un-

less they are booked into our jail.”

Steele said he remembered Baughn talking about the issue in 2007.

“You said you would no longer be accepting the liability,” Steele said.

Baughn said a separate topic resolved by the same attorney general opinion was whether the City of Colby can pass along to the county costs for manpower, fuel and meals for transporting mentally ill people.

“The transporting law enforcement agency has to absorb (the

costs),” the opinion says.

“The Legislature needs to look at this issue because the state has mentally ill people in jail that do not need to be there and that’s a legislative issue,” Baughn said. “The state is trying to push costs off on to the county.”

Baughn gave the commissioners draft copies of three resolutions he proposes for adoption by the county to assess prisoners some of the costs of their detention in the county jail.

Those costs could, if adopted, be related to for paperwork incurred for the work release program, as well as costs for booking fees and fingerprints, and a daily per diem for meals, lodging and personal supplies.

The commissioners have forwarded the draft copies to County Attorney Andrea Wyrick for review.

“The resolutions would help the taxpayers,” Baughn said.

Felony charges filed on car chase suspect

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Free Press Reporter
jkackerman@gmail.com

Charges have been filed in Thomas County District Court against the Texas man who led state and county law enforcement officers on a high speed chase last Wednesday. The chase started near Oakley on Interstate 70 in Thomas County and ended near Campus in Gove County.

Aaron K. Stanley, 21, of Denison, Texas, is in the Thomas County Jail for felony fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer. He has also been charged with one count of obstruction of official duty and one count of reckless

driving. If convicted, and depending on his criminal background history, Stanley faces five to 17 months in prison and a fine up to \$100,000 for the fleeing charge; one year in the county jail and a fine up to \$2,500 for the obstruction charge; and one month in the county jail and a fine up to \$500 for the reckless driving charge.

The chase started at about 1 p.m., April 16, when Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn and Deputy Marc Finley joined the pursuit of Stanley after the gas theft in Gove County was called in. Also involved in the chase were Gove County Sheriff Allen Weber and his undersheriff, Aaron Bridges; Logan County Sheriff Pat Parsons

and his undersheriff, David See; as well as Kansas Highway Patrol Troopers Doug Reed, Greg Jirak and Terry Kummer. See was the officer that arrested Stanley after a chase that lasted close to an hour.

“(Stanley) got his vehicle stuck in a field northeast of Oakley in Thomas County and David ran after him and captured him,” Parsons said. “No charges will be filed in Logan County since it took place in Gove and Thomas Counties.” Trooper Reed spotted the 2002 Dodge pickup Stanley had been reported driving east-bound on I-70 near Oakley. Reed stopped Stanley just west of Oakley near Colonial Steakhouse exit, but as Reed returned to speak with

Stanley after checking the pickup’s registration, at which time he learned the pickup was a stolen vehicle, Stanley fled.

Baughn said he is in the process of getting estimates for the patrol car which crashed in to a ravine during the pursuit. At the time of the incident, Baughn said Finley came over a ridge in a pasture and was unable to stop before sliding on damp buffalo grass and then plummeting into the ravine.

Neither Finley or the K-9 dog, Revele, were injured in the incident.

Weber said Stanley has been charged in Gove County District Court for gasoline theft from Park Oil, a gas station in Park.

Briefly

Day of prayer set May 1

The Thomas County Ministerial Alliance invites everyone to join them at noon, Thursday, May 1, in front of the Thomas County Courthouse, 300 N. Court Ave., Colby, for observance of the national day of prayer. There will be opportunities for group and individual prayers. The service concludes at 12:30 p.m.

Reservations due today

The Prairie Museum of Art and History will have its annual meeting at 6:15 p.m., Saturday, May 3, at the facility, 1905 S. Franklin Ave., Colby. The “Connection” campaign kick-off will be fun and entertaining, organizers said, and feature appearances by archeologists, homesteaders, and many other

personalities. To reserve a complimentary ticket or questions, call (785) 460-4590 or e-mail: prairiem@st-tel.net by today.

Reception Thursday

A public reception will be held at 3 p.m., Thursday, honoring Joe Mildrexler, the 2008 honorary associate degree recipient. Retired from Colby Community College after 42 years, Mildrexler’s reception will be in the Multipurpose room of the Robert Burnett Memorial Student Union on campus. Everyone is welcome.

Band concert May 1

A spring band concert will be held at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, May 1, at the Frahm Theater on the cam-

pus of Colby Community College. Director for the instrumental concert is Bradley Herndon. Everyone is welcome and admission is free.

Marriage meeting Saturday

Couples Conference 2008: Making Good Marriages Great will be live via satellite and is being sponsored by Colby Wesleyan Church and Church Communication Network from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Saturday.

The satellite conference will be held at the church, 320 W. Pine, with breakfast and lunch included. Free childcare is available by reservation. To reserve a place or questions, call 462-8391.

‘Aprilfest’ Sunday

The Sacred Heart Catholic Youth Organization is

sponsoring “Aprilfest,” from 2 to 5 p.m., Sunday, in the school’s gymnasium. For costs, call McLemore 443-3042.

Second half of taxes due

The Thomas County Treasurer’s office is reminding taxpayers the second half of 2007 personal property and real estate taxes are due May 10. Since May 10 falls on a Saturday, taxpayers have until Monday, May 12 to pay the final half. For questions, call 460-4520.

Annual springfest May 3

The town of McDonald will hold its third annual “Springfest” from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, May 3, on the main street of downtown McDonald.