



Finding employment



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Steve Salisbury of Wallace, right, talked to Stacy Horinek, middle, KansasWorks, about job opportunities in the Colby area and across the state. The KansasWorks Mobile Center was in Colby Friday at the Thomas County Office Complex and again Saturday to help employers find qualified job candidates. The mobile center and the 2008 Northwest Kansas Employment Expo attracted hundreds of people Saturday to the Colby Community Building with more than 30 area employers having booths available. The Thomas County/Colby Area Chamber of Commerce also partnered in sponsoring both events.

County signs agreement with city

By Jan Katz Ackerman
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A communications agreement for 2009 between the City of Colby and county officials was signed by county commission meeting on Friday. On the agenda for the city council's next meeting, if approved, the same agreement will be signed by city officials Tuesday evening.

Representing the City of Colby were Deb Zerr, financial director, and Police Chief Randy Jones.

Of the \$215,477 communications package, the county will pay the city \$90,501 for dispatchers. The city will pay \$124,977 for the round-the-clock, 365 day a year service.

"The county will pay 42 percent and the city pays 58 percent," Commissioner Paul Steele said. "That's up one percent from last year."

Of the \$215,477 communications agreement, \$175,082 goes for police dispatcher salaries. The Colby Police Department dispatches for not only the police department, but for the Enhanced 911 service, the Colby, Gem, Rexford and Brewster fire departments, the sheriff's office, emergency medical service, the road and bridge department and emergency preparedness department as well.

In 2008, the county paid \$79,902 of a total budget of \$194,884 for the agreement. Salaries ran \$156,549. A total break down of the agreement is on file at the county clerk's office located at 300 N. Court Ave. in Colby.

Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Byron Sowers and Steele talked to Zerr and Jones about Overland Park based energy service company Custom Energy. They told Zerr and Jones on Thursday

they talked with Custom Energy executives about the possibility of installing insulation over the suspended ceiling in the law enforcement center building which is located at 225 N. Court Ave.

The City of Colby pays all the utilities at the law enforcement center, but the county owns the building. The commissioners believe insulation would benefit the city by reducing energy costs.

"That's a good idea," Jones said. "But all the phone and internet wires are above the ceiling."

After a brief discussion, the topic was tabled due to the fact the phone and internet wires are accessed on an ongoing basis and insulation may make it more difficult for employees doing the work.

The building, which was built in 1976, is scheduled for a new roof as part of an energy upgrade project the county has undertaken through Custom Energy. No dollar figures about the project have been presented yet.

In other business, the commissioners approved the 2008 noxious weed plan for the county, of which a copy of it is on file in the clerk's office; approved purchase of a replacement door for one of the county shop bays from Raynor Doors of Colby in the amount of \$3,409; and approved writing a check for \$78,550 for payment on a 2008 Sterline LT 8513 truck so when it is delivered by Kansas Truck Center of Wichita the payment can be on hand in the clerk's office upon delivery. Also approved was the transfer of title of a utility trailer from the Thomas County Emergency Management Department to the City of Colby and purchase of a 90-gallon cabinet for storage of flammable items at the landfill in the amount of \$1,469.

Tornado deaths spur better warnings

WICHITA (AP) — It's turning out to be a deadly year for tornadoes, especially for drivers caught in a storm's path.

The deaths last month of a Colorado couple whose car was tossed more than 100 yards from a southwest Kansas highway brought the state's total of people killed by twisters while

in their vehicle to three in the last 11 months.

That has the Kansas Department of Transportation looking for more effective ways to warn drivers of severe weather and how they should take proper precautions.

While signs near toll booths on the Kansas Turnpike tell drivers

to tune into 1610-AM for travel advisories, similar signs aren't posted along the other major east-west corridors of Interstate 70 and U.S. 54.

"We're really trying to hash out what we should put up," said department spokesman Tom Hein.

"These storms have encour-

aged us to look at that and try to find a solution."

Nationally, the number of people killed by tornadoes while in their vehicles — 14 as of Wednesday — is the highest annual total since 1998, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Storm Prediction Center.

Commissioners begin search for new health administrator

By Jan Katz Ackerman
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The search for a new public health administrator is on and moving forward.

"You have to have a strong administrator to make clinical decisions," said Lisa Molstad, current public health administrator. Molstad is moving to Florida in August to live closer to her teenage son.

Molstad talked to County Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers on Friday about four options they can consider for staffing at the Thomas County Public Health Department.

The options range from a single manager setup like is in place now, to one that has a registered nurse overseeing the medical side and a business manager overseeing the schedule and billing side.

"The whole idea is to develop a team that can work together so you don't have a lot of turnover,"

Molstad said.

Steele said he preferred Option B over Options C and D, the scenarios which provides for two managers.

"My first thought, with two people in charge, is that you'd have a two-headed monster there," Steele said. "My heart tells me it would work, but my head tells me I'm an idiot."

Steele said that while many organizations operate efficiently with two managers, he is concerned that is not the best option for the county health department.

Sowers said he likes the idea of having an office assistant to help the administrator, but wanted to see the bottom line as far as costs.

Using the scenario Molstad labeled "Option B," it would cost \$141,760 in salaries alone to run the public health department. Staff would consist of someone to replace Molstad; Connie Walden, full-time registered nurse; a new part-time registered nurse; Laurie Allen, part-time medical billing clerk; Joyce Schroeder, part-time

home visitor; a receptionist and medical records clerk to replace Viviana Garibay who is moving to Hays; and a new position of office assistant. Numerous other people work with the department on a contract labor basis, such as Juanita Gatz, an advanced registered nurse practitioner.

Christiansen asked Molstad whether she believes a registered nurse would want to work on a part-time basis.

"I don't know until you put it out there," Molstad said.

Molstad said she has met with the current staff to seek input for the staffing options.

"This gives you food for thought," she said.

The commissioners Molstad to start looking for her replacement by advertising in the Colby Free Press and other state-wide county and public health communications. They also directed her to place ads for a part-time registered nurse to fill staff positions as outlined in Option B.

Options A is the same as Option

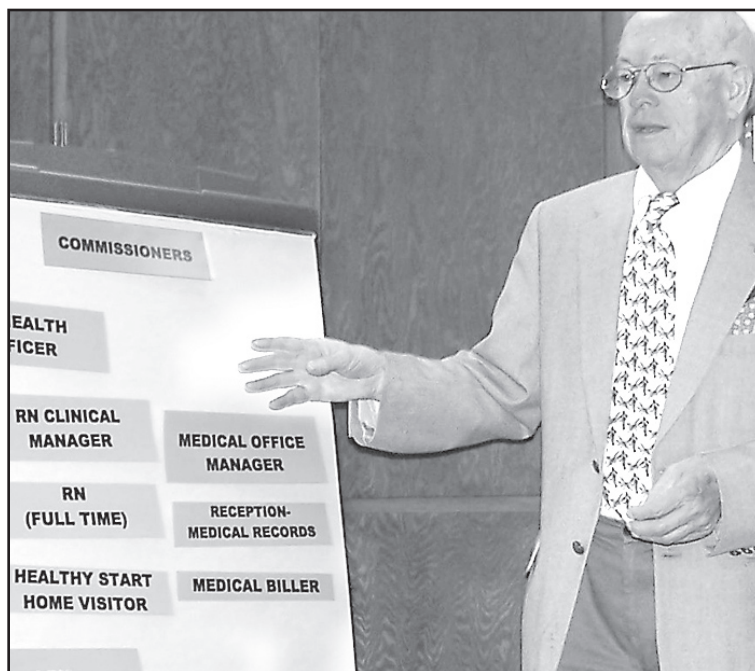
B, minus the job of office assistant who will help the administrator with paperwork and keeping up with grant reports. Option C and Option D outline the two manager positions.

Option D includes a job description of administrative consultant with an annual salary of \$5,000, of which Molstad volunteered to fill in order to prepare state required quarterly grant reports. Options A, C nor D were supported by the commissioners.

Molstad asked for permission to close the public health department on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of this week due to a majority of the staff having out-of-town obligations.

The commissioners approved the request, contingent on Molstad having an answering machine recording instructing the public about who to contact in an emergency. She agreed.

Thomas County Public Department is located at 350 S. Range Ave. in Colby and the phone number is (785) 460-4596.



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Commissioner Paul Steele talked to outgoing Public Health Administrator Lisa Molstad about staffing options for the public health department she presented at the commission meeting Friday.

Briefly

Day camp set June 12

The 2008 4-H Day Camp, which is open to any child who has just completed first, second, third or fourth grade, will be held Thursday, June 12, at Fike Park. This year's theme is "Friends," and the cost is \$5, which includes lunch. "Join us for games, crafts and fun," said Diann Gerstner, Thomas County Extension family and consumer science agent. "We will end the day with water games, so be prepared to get wet and bring a clean squirt bottle." To pre-register, call (785) 460-4582 or stop by the Thomas County Extension Office, 350 S. Range, Suite 16, Colby. The dates were changed due to conflicting with Picnic in the Park activities.

County health closed

The Thomas County Health Department will be closed Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Those needing immediate assistance during this time for health department business are asked to call (785) 443-0375, said Lisa Molstad, administrator.

Moving Wall to visit

American veterans and their supporters will have an opportunity to visit one of the county's famous memorials, the Moving Wall, while it is in Hoxie from June 12 to 16.

Starting with an opening ceremonies at 8 a.m. on

Thursday, June 12, the Moving Wall will stand on the Sheridan County Fairgrounds through a closing ceremony at 2 p.m. on Monday, June 16. Also referred to as the Traveling Wall, the half-scale replica wall and the Healing Wall, contain the names of each veteran as listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D. C. Paid for entirely by donations, the Moving Wall is 252.83 feet, slightly longer than one-half the length of the granite memorial in the nation's capital.

Class of '98 plans reunion

Members of the Colby High School Class of 1998 are planning a 10-year reunion. The plans are to

meet at 8 p.m., Friday, July 25 at City Limits fireside lounge for a social, then at noon, Saturday, July 26 at Fike Park for a brown bag lunch. Also on Saturday, at 6:30 p.m., the class will be dining together in Montana Mike's. For information, visit: www.eagle-salumni.org

Picnic in Park Wednesday

The annual "Picnic in the Park" events begin at noon, Wednesday at Fike Park and will continue through Wednesday, July 30, said Holly Stephens, executive director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce. Kicking off the event is Larry Booth.