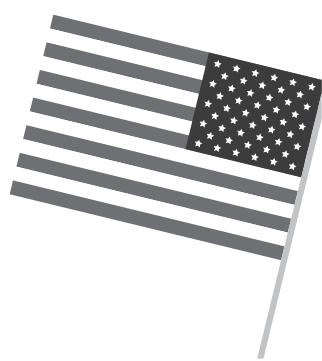


# AMERICAN flag in today's edition



8 pages

## COLBY FREE PRESS

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Thursday

June 12, 2008  
Volume 119, Number 94  
Serving Thomas County since 1888

## Extension council asks for increase

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
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Paperwork continues to pile up on the desk of the county commissioners as agencies submit requests for taxpayer money.

Mike Brown, treasurer for the Thomas County Extension Council, told Commissioners Ken Christiansen and Paul Steele the council for 2009 is asking for a 5.39 percent increase over the 2008 appropriation. For the fiscal year 2008, taxpayers paid \$124,200 of the extension council's total budget of \$210,000. For 2009, the Extension Council is asking for \$130,900, up \$6,700 in the proposed \$232,200 budget.

During 2008, Kansas State University funded \$36,400 of the budget. For 2009, K-State is being asked for \$37,300, an increase of 2.47 percent.

Steele said Commissioner Byron Sowers, absent from the first half of Monday's meeting, Christiansen and he are concerned about all incoming budget requests.

"I feel more apprehensive about

this budget than any other budget since I've seen sworn in," Steele said. Steele was elected county commissioner in 2004.

Steele, Christiansen and Sowers for the past two months have been accepting budget requests from county agencies.

The printed requests help them formalize how taxpayer money will be spent in 2009.

"I don't want you to go away from this meeting thinking that we are not supportive of the Extension," Steele said. "But we are being told by the county appraiser (Mary Cech) that she expects about \$1.3 million dollar decrease in valuation this year."

County appraisers certify to county clerks the valuations of property sometime during the month of June so clerks in turn can determine total assessed values for the next tax year.

"To sum up what Paul's saying," Christiansen said. "We are going to do the best with what we've got to work with."

"We appreciate whatever help you can give us," Brown said.

Steele said he is afraid the drain

on taxpayer money is "taxing people out of their homes."

Representatives from the Thomas County Conservation District also gave the commissioners paperwork about their proposed budget for 2009.

Danielle Freeman, manager for the district, along with Melanie Jackson, board chairman, Jon Starns, vice chairman, and Andrew Burr, district conservationist, attended the meeting.

Freeman said the district is asking for an increase of \$1,656 over the 2008 county appropriation. In 2008, Thomas County taxpayers gave the district \$40,844 of the total budget of \$67,478.

The proposed budget for 2009 is \$78,450.

Steele told the group the same news he shared with those from the Extension Council about declining valuations.

He also said the commissioners were "supportive of the conservation district."

"We've got so much money and we've got so much and we'll do what we can to help you," Christiansen said.

## Cookin' and singin'



JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

**RIGHT:** Drummer Andrew Melia, left, and lead guitarist Howard Culver from the band Pieces of Pieces of Eight performed during Wednesday's Picnic in the Park at Fike Park. Next week's featured performers are the Bugbee Sisters, Monica and Karla. **TOP:** Debbie Ford was one of many volunteers from the organization LINK (Living Independently in Northwest Kansas) serving food and drinks to park-goers during Wednesday's festivities. The Colby Kiwanis Club will be cooking hot dogs with all the trimmings for free-will donations next Wednesday. The Kiwanis Club is using this opportunity to raise money in buying fireworks for the Fourth of July display. Everyone is welcome.



## Wheat harvest program open

State officials are taking the task of connecting farmers with custom cutters to a new level, making technology one of their tools.

"The Kansas Wheat Harvest Program was started more than 40 years ago," said Joe Monaco, public information officer with the Kansas Department of Commerce.

"We've changed it a bit so it doesn't resemble what it was when it started."

Formerly using community-based offices where farmers could connect with customer cutters, Monaco said that system "wasn't working," so the Department of Commerce has moved to toll-free

phone and internet services for the work.

The program's toll-free number is (877) 251-4328 with people available to take calls from 6 to 9 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m., seven days a week. There is a 24-hour voice-mail service and staff members can be reached at WheatHarvest@KansasCommerce.com. Monaco said the program will also provide daily harvest reports that track the progress of the harvest. Audio and written reports are available at [www.kansaswheat.org](http://www.kansaswheat.org).

"Harvest activities from Kansas Wheat include the seventh annual Harvest Salute," Monaco said. "The Harvest Salute recognizes

the value of Kansas wheat producers and conveys a message of appreciation for a contribution that goes beyond economic benefit. These folks have created an agricultural heritage that is unmatched and made Kansas the 'breadbasket of the world.'"

Kansas Department of Commerce Secretary David Kerr agreed with Monaco.

"We know how important the wheat harvest is to our state," Kerr said. "We're excited to partner with Kansas Wheat on this year's program, and I'm optimistic these services will help Kansas farmers find the custom cutters they need for a successful harvest."

## Former professional racing champion in Colby Sunday

By Joey Falkoff  
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Two-Time NASCAR Busch Series champion Randy Lajoie conquered some of the toughest race tracks in the United States during his 23-year professional career.

Most importantly, he lived to tell about it. With his racing days now



Lajoie

behind him, the 47-year old Lajoie wants others in the sport to be able to do the same.

"I've been fortunate to win a lot of races, but I've also hit a lot of stuff," said Lajoie. "These guys that race for fun and have weekly jobs can't afford to get hurt. If you're going 25 miles per hour and hit something the wrong way, your next trip could be to a pine box."

Lajoie retired from professional racing in 2006 to expand his race car seat business, "The Joie of Seating," which manufactures high-quality aluminum seats for all levels of racing. This year, Lajoie is crossing the country to

reach out to short track drivers with his program called the "Safer Racer Tour."

"In order make my seat company survive, I've got to hit the road," said Lajoie. "I still love racing and reading the papers to see who won, but it gets my goat to read about somebody getting hurt, killed or burned."

"At the top three levels of racing, safety is very good. It's the lower levels that need help, and that's what I plan on doing."

Lajoie will be in Jetmore and Dodge City Friday and Saturday before making a stop at the Thomas County Speedway in Colby 7 p.m. Sunday. This weekend will

not only be his first time in western Kansas, but his first to the entire state of Kansas. He even mentioned that on his NASCAR Sirius radio show earlier in the week.

"I just hope I don't get blown away," joked Lajoie.

He is expected to run in the IMCA Modified division race, but his main focus will be informing drivers on the dangers of riding in an unsafe vehicle.

Lajoie will conduct safety demonstrations and car inspections for drivers, as well as display safety advancements in the areas of driver seats and proper use of support equipment.

"If I go to a race track, out of 80

cars, there are probably a handful that are safe," said Lajoie. "Between videos, talking to guys and looking at cars, there are a lot of things the drivers don't know that can hurt them."

After his safety presentations are complete, Lajoie will take to the dirt track for one of the first times in his career. Lajoie said he's only run about 25 laps on a dirt track, and has mixed emotions about doing it this weekend.

"It's a double-edged sword," he said. "I know it's not that hard because Kenny Wallace (NASCAR driver) does it. On the other side, they do it for a living and I don't want to mess anyone up. If I take

\$25 away from someone, I don't want to do that either."

While he says his competitive juices will be flowing, Lajoie is also a realist.

"When you strap on a helmet, you always want to win," said Lajoie.

"I also know I've never done this before. Winning could be an option, but it's not likely."

"My first objective is not to hurt anybody."

Safety wasn't always Lajoie's number one concern. It was winning, and he did a lot of it back in his heyday.

See "RACING," Page 3

## Briefly

### Red Cross plans classes

The Thomas County Red Cross is hosting three classes in June, said Sherry White, manager. All classes will run from 7 to 10 p.m. and the location will be announced at a later date. The three classes include First Aid, Tuesday, June 24; Adult CPR and Infant/child CPR, both scheduled for Wednesday, June 25. For costs, other questions or to register, call White at (785) 462-7161.

### College to meet

The Colby Community College board of trustees will meet at 5 p.m., Monday, in the board room of Thomas Hall. Agenda items include contracts, agreements and resolutions; reports from administrative

council; feedlot certification program; drug and alcohol policy; resignation; budget update and enrollment. All meetings are open to the public.

### Bible school planned

Colby Wesleyan Church will have Vacation Bible School from 9-11:30 a.m. June 23-27 at the church, 320 W. Pine. All children 4 through those who have finished fifth grade are invited. The school is about service under the theme "God's Big Backyard." Children will participate in the large-group excitement of Backyard Bash, experience God's word at Backyard Bible Club, meet real servants at community corner plus have crafts, snacks and games, organizers said. For questions, call 462-8391.

### Amusement group to meet

The Thomas County Amusement Association will hold its regular meeting at 8 p.m., Monday, at the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave., Colby. All meetings are open to the public. For questions, call (785) 462-5857.

### Glassware wanted

Anyone who has glassware they would like to get rid of are encouraged to contact the Thomas County Amusement Association at (785) 462-5857 or 462-6132 or any of the board members to include: Kerry Wark, Tina Harris, Daman Glover, Melinda Morton, Tom Wallsmith or Johnny Maupin.

### Mosquito fogging starts

The City of Colby crews will be fogging for mosquitoes beginning Thursday and through the remainder of summer. Mondays or Tuesdays, city employees will fog on the south side of town from Webster south. On Thursdays or Fridays, fogging will be on the north side of town from Webster north.

### Swim club to host meet

The Colby Swim Club will be hosting a swim meet in Colby, Saturday, June 21. More than 300 swimmers and their families will be in town. For questions or to help with setup, call Publicity Chair Teri Cloe at 460-9630 or 443-2418 or Head Coach Sondra Finley 460-2955.