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Relay for Life begins Friday at Fike Park

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Colby's Fike Park will be the location for this year's annual Relay for Life Celebration in Thomas County beginning at 7 p.m., Friday.

For more than a decade, the event, which benefits the American Cancer Society by raising money for research and a cure, has offered participants and visitors a night of fun, games and fellowship. The opening ceremony starts at 7 p.m. with Paula Halvorson, a cancer survivor speaking, followed by a flag ceremony by area Girl Scouts; the Star Spangled Banner with Brock Wagoner, Kevin Lang and Gray Henry; open prayer with Pastor Dorine Chambers and more.

Throughout the evening, said Diane Stithem, one of the organiz-

ers, there will be a silent auction and the luminary service will begin at 10 p.m.

As part of the luminary service a candlelight ceremony, prayer survivor story, singing, and reading of the luminaries will take place.

Other highlights during the 12-hour event will include introduction of "Heroes of Hope," the survivors/caregivers walk; a fight back ceremony and much more.

"Don't make any plans for Friday night, or you will miss an opportunity of a life-time," Stithem said. Teams will be walking throughout the evening and into the early morning hours on Saturday, but everyone is welcome to join in the fun, she said.

For questions or to purchase a luminary in remembrance of someone who lost their battle with cancer, call Stithem or Carla Sharp with the Relay for Life committee, 460-7451.

Minimum wage going up 70 cents

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 2 million Americans get a raise today as the federal minimum wage rises 70 cents. The bad news: Higher gas and food prices are swallowing it up, and some small businesses will pass the cost of the wage hike to consumers.

The increase, from \$5.85 to \$6.55 per hour, is the second of three annual increases required by a 2007 law. Next year's boost will bring the federal minimum to \$7.25 an hour.

Workers like Walter Jasper, who earns minimum wage at a car wash in Nashville, Tenn., are happy to take the raise, but will still struggle with the higher gas and food prices hammering Americans.

"It will help out a little," said Jasper, who with his fiancée support a family of seven, and who earns the minimum plus commissions when customers order premium car-wash services.

The bus fare he pays each day to get to work already went up to \$4.80 this spring from \$4. "I'd

like to be on a job where I can at least get a car," he said.

Last week, the Labor Department reported the fastest inflation since 1991 — 5 percent for June compared with a year earlier. Energy costs soared nearly 25 percent. The price of food rose more than 5 percent.

So the minimum wage hike is "a drop in the bucket compared to the increases in costs, declining labor market, and declining household wealth that consumers have experienced in the past year," Lehman Brothers economist Zach Pandl said. The new minimum is less than the inflation-adjusted 1997 level of \$7.02, and far below the inflation-adjusted level of \$10.06 from 40 years ago, according to a Labor Department inflation calculator. Many states and the District of Columbia have laws making the minimum wage higher than the new federal requirement, a group covering 60 percent of U.S. workers, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a think tank.



MICHELLE MYERS/Colby Free Press

Hot temps, but cool tunes

RIGHT: Dan Keller serenaded the crowd with his jazz skills and a few familiar tunes at the annual "Picnic in the Park" Wednesday. The last performance will be Larry and Taylor McLemore Wednesday, July 30. The event is sponsored by the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau and *Colby Free Press*. **ABOVE:** Despite 100 degree weather, a family enjoyed a picnic together noon Wednesday at "Picnic in the Park."



Commissioners approve drilling two new wells at landfill

By **Jan Katz Ackerman**
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County commissioners on Monday approved drilling two new wells at the landfill in order to monitor groundwater contaminants.

"(Wally) explained that wells are like a piece of machinery," Landfill Director Larry Jumper said. "They eventually wear out."

Jumper talked with Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers about questions they last week wanted Wally Mack, environmental scientist with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's hydrogeologic unit, to answer.

The commissioners at their meeting July 14 asked Jumper to find out why the KDHE wanted the county to drill two new monitoring wells this year rather than one now and one in four years. The cost of the two wells will total \$9,600 and work is expected to be completed by October.

"The two monitoring wells that need to be replaced are the two most down-gradient monitoring wells of the network," Mack said in a written reply Jumper gave the commissioners.

Well Nos. 4 and 5 have been dry since May 2007, and new wells will be drilled as close to the original wells as possible, Jumper said. The landfill has six functioning wells besides the two dry ones.

The commissioners also wanted to know who far below ground level shale would be encountered during the drilling process.

"An industrial well was completed on site on Sept. 19, 2006," Mack wrote. He said the well was drilled 260 feet below ground surface, and shale was tapped into at 257 feet. The site of the well sits at 2,923 feet above sea level.

Steele said since the landfill needs monitoring wells on both the up hill side and down hill side, as well as three wells in the middle, the state is not going to require re-drilling of any wells.

"I want you to know we are coming out of this deal on the good side," Steele said. "I think Commissioner Sowers saved us

from having to drill another well for ten years."

Sowers urged Jumper to talk to Mack and ask questions on behalf of the commissioners. Sowers wanted to know why the county could not drill the current wells deeper and put a smaller diameter casing inside the old casing.

"This will not work for environmental groundwater monitoring wells and would compromise the integrity of the monitoring wells," Mack wrote.

The depth of well No. 4 is 188 feet and No. 5 is 189 feet deep. The two new wells will be drilled 30 feet deeper to assure 5 feet of the well-screen, a screen from which water is tested, is above the water table and 25 feet is below

the water table.

"This way, the monitoring well will be able to monitor any seasonal fluctuations of the water table and would last for many years into the future," Mack said.

Jumper also talked with the commissioners about how the compensation package for his employees was shaping up for the upcoming budget.

He said some of the employees at the landfill were questioning why others made more money, but they had worked there longer.

"We have two ways to compensate people," Steele said. "People outside with higher risk start at \$10 an hour, and people inside with less risk start at \$9 an hour." Steele said longevity also fac-

tors into how much county employees earn.

"We have to consider is that while it sounds good to try and equalize everyone," Steele said. "Sooner or later we have people who all know how much they are making and it's not all the same."

The topic was tabled. Jumper said he was asked by the Colby Police Department about opening the landfill during the night to dispose of hazardous materials confiscated during arrests. After a brief discussion, the commissioners decided since the county pays the City of Colby \$20,000 per year to hire two people to handle hazardous materials the disposal of them can take place during normal business hours.

Briefly

Marching academy Aug. 4

The Colby High School band will be having its Marching Academy from 9 a.m. until noon, Monday through Friday, Aug. 4-8, in the high school bandroom. Every member of the Colby High School band program is requested to attend, said Joey Nickols, instructor. Students will be receiving informational packets in the mail soon. For questions, call Nickols, 460-0599.

Book sale begins Monday

Pioneer Memorial Library is sponsoring a "Book

Sale Blowout," during regular library hours, Monday through Saturday, July 28-Aug. 2, in the library basement. For questions, call 460-4470.

Triathlon set for Saturday

The Colby Recreation Department is hosting its first Iron Athlete Triathlon beginning at 9 a.m., Saturday, at the gazebo in Fike Park. Even though some participants have already signed up, they will still need to take part in the final registration starting at 8:30 a.m. Others interested in the triathlon can still register the day of the event. The triathlon is open to the public but scholarships will be awarded to the top

three high school graduates of 2008, said Stacy Lee, recreation director. The triathlon begins at 9 a.m. with a 30-mile bike ride, then a 600 meter swim at the Colby Municipal Pool, and will end with a 5K run. "We will start at the gazebo," she said, "and end right behind the Community Building." Awards will be given after the race in the Community Building. For questions, call 460-4440.

Pet adoption available

Colby Animal Clinic has a young, male Basset Hound ready for adoption. Clinic officials said he is friendly, has lots of energy and would make a good

farm dog. The clinic also has a five-month-old, male, Chocolate Lab puppy who is cute and playful and a male grey kitten needing a loving family. Interested people can call or stop by the facility at 810 E. Fourth St. All adopted animals have current shots. The goal is to find homes for these animals rather than have them euthanized. For questions, call 460-8621.

Albino rabbit found

The Colby Animal Clinic had a male Albino rabbit brought to their facility this week. The rabbit was found on Lincoln Street. If someone knows who the animal belongs to, call the clinic at (785) 460-8621.