



8 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

50¢

Thursday

November 6, 2008  
Volume 119, Number 177  
Serving Thomas County since 1888



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press  
Deputy Kenneth Patton talked with Gary Shull, a retired Colby Police Department detective, at Patton's retirement party at the Colby Law Enforcement Training Center on Tuesday.

## Long-time sheriff's deputy trades badge for fishing rod

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press  
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Deputy Kenneth Patton says he decided it was time to get out of the rat race.

After 22 years with the Thomas County Sheriff's Department, Patton retired on Tuesday.

"I hit 62 this month," he said, "and the job I'm doing is a job that should be done by a younger person."

Patton and his wife Georgia said they plan to move to Grand Junction, Colo., where they can be closer to their 10 grandkids. Eight of the 10 live in Colorado, most in or near Grand Junction, on the western slope. One lives east of the Front Range. Their oldest grandchild is 25 years old and his youngest is 3, Patton said. Two grandchildren live in Nebraska.

Patton said he and his wife would probably be moving within three to four months. He added that he has to sell the house before then.

"It's time to slow down and enjoy the grandkids," he said. "They miss us and we miss them."

Patton was the department's first K-9 handler, Sheriff Mike Baughn said.

The deputy said there are some unpleasant parts of his job that are hard to forget.

"The thing that bothers most of us is the fatality accidents," Patton said. "Losing someone you worked with gives you a feeling of mortality."

Although Patton said he feels it's time to move on, he has some fond memories of his days working for the department.

He said he enjoyed "the geniality and friendship of the people I worked with and getting together with fellow officers' families where we could feel like citizens for a while."

Patton said he plans to do some more fishing now that he is retired. He received a new rod at a retirement party the sheriff's department threw for him on Tuesday. He said he does not go out for any particular kind of fish.

"I fish for whatever I can find," he said. "I just like to fish."

Baughn said Patton will be missed at the department.

"He was a good, reliable deputy," Baughn said. "He has been enjoyable to work with and he has always been ready for duty."

Patton said there is one thing he will miss about his job.

"I will miss working with the people and for the people," he said.

## Obama spends day working on economy

CHICAGO (AP) — Barack Obama planned his first public appearance since his presidential victory for Friday — a meeting with economic advisers to discuss the nation's financial woes that Americans listed as their top concern on Election Day.

Obama plans to talk to the news media Friday afternoon following the meeting, aides said. He and his wife, Michelle, will visit the White House on Monday at President Bush's invitation, aides said.

Obama's schedule today includes meetings with top U.S. intelligence officials preparing him to be commander in chief and transition team leaders tasked with building his entire administration in 10 short weeks.

Obama advisers said he was selecting the leaders of the new government with a sense of care over speed, with no plans to announce Cabinet positions this week.

The president-elect asked Illinois Rep. Rahm Emanuel to be White

House chief of staff, but Emanuel said he was weighing the demands of the job on his family. No announcement on the chief of staff position was expected today, said an Obama adviser.

Other White House officials were being lined up, including Robert Gibbs as the likely pick for press secretary, said several Obama aides. Gibbs has been Obama's longtime spokesman and confidant and was at Obama's side from his 2004 Senate campaign through the long days on the presidential campaign trail.

Obama planned to stay home through the weekend, with a blackout on news announcements so that he and his staff can get some rest. He is planning a trip to Hawaii in December to get away with his family before their move to the White House — and to honor his grandmother, who died Sunday at her home there.

Obama began today as he almost always does, with a workout. Later, he planned to visit with his transi-

tion team.

He also planned to head to the FBI office in Chicago, a secure location for him to receive his first president's daily brief. The document is mostly written by the Central Intelligence Agency and includes the most critical overnight intelligence. It is accompanied by a briefing from top intelligence officials that typically lasts 45 minutes to an hour, although Obama's first is expected to be longer.

In offering the White House post to Emanuel, Obama turned to a fellow Chicago politician. Emanuel, who was a political and policy aide in the Clinton White House, told Chicago's WLS-TV that he was honored to be considered but needed to weigh the impact on his family.

The economy was the overwhelming concern on the mind of voters Tuesday, according to Associated Press exit polls. More than six in 10 voters picked the economy as the most important issue facing the nation.

## Wind causes firemen trouble

A downed power line started a field northwest of Levant on fire about 11:20 a.m., and wind gusts up to 60 mph whipped flames through stubble and grass, threatening several structures.

A call came in at 11:20 a.m. that a power line three miles north and a mile west of Levant on Thomas County Road U had set a corn field on fire. The Colby and Brewster fire departments were called out, and a line crew from Midwest Energy also responded.

The National Weather Service in Goodland said wind speeds were expected to continue at up to 40 to 50 mph through sunset. Gusts

up to 60 mph whipped corn stalks, tumbleweeds and trash around.

By 11:30 a.m., the fire had spread to grass in the same area, with two to three buildings in its path. Around noon, firemen reported that the original corn field fire was under control but a circle of irrigated corn, with a diesel pump and fuel tank, was in danger.

By 12:30 p.m., Colby firemen had several units and every available firefighter on the scene while Thomas County had a tanker and Brewster firemen had at least two units. Several farmers showed up with tanks and discs to help corral the blaze.

One resident reported that people were trying to move several combines out of a shed near the flames. The fire jumped into a windbreak, but firemen got it out. Other than the wind, one problem firemen faced was running out of water in pumpers and brush trucks, which had to be replenished from tankers and a city flusher truck.

County Commissioner Paul Steele said the county had declared a "state of emergency" until the fire was out, giving Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan authority to deal with the situation. By 1:30 p.m., firemen reported that the fire was under control.



EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press

A city electrical crew was out Thursday morning after winds reaching 55 miles per hour broke tree branches and downed a power line near Fourth Street and Cleveland Avenue. Brad Davis (above, with chain saw) and Shiloh Brogan removed the branch after it fell on the 220-volt service line to a nearby house. They said the city would not be able to restore power to the house until an electrician repairs the electrical mast leading to the meter box, which was pulled away from the wall.

## County claims more cash need to fix damaged roofs

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press  
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Thomas County Commissioner Paul Steele has made a claim against the county's insurance carrier because the cost for replacing the courthouse and Law Enforcement Center roofs appears to be a lot more than the company anticipated.

Commissioner Paul Steele said the county had asked the commission's engineering consultant, Custom Energy, to meet with the Kansas County Association Multi-Line Pool, an insurance coopera-

tive that covers county buildings, on the claim.

The commissioners gave Custom Energy the green light Friday to go ahead and start working on replacing the roof on the law enforcement building, at 225 N. Court Ave.

The commissioners also approved a contract with Colby Implement requiring the company to check the standby generator at the law enforcement building each month. The contract will last for a year.

In other business Friday, the commissioners:

- Approved cell phone/pager

agreements for the Emergency Medical Service Department and ambulance crew. The agreement requires everyone to use county-paid cell phones and pagers only for conducting official business.

- Signed off on a contract between the Thomas County Fair Board and E&G Promotions. In the contract, the fair board has leased the Thomas County Speedway to E&G Promotions for races over the next three years.

- Heard that the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance had approved a "bridge" loan to Embark health care for \$45,000 to help get its operations going.

## Briefly

### Food signup is this week

Prairie Land Food, formerly Share, is having signup for November delivery through Friday at State Farm Insurance, 905 E. Fourth St., Colby. Delivery will be at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 22, at the Sacred Heart Catholic School gym. The cost is \$23.50 plus two hours of volunteer time. For information, call Gene Griffin (785) 460-3579 or Mary Schroeder (785) 462-7525.

### Women celebrate community

World Community Day will be observed with a service at 9:30 a.m. Friday at the First Presbyterian Church in Colby. The event is sponsored by Church Women United, a national group of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox women in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. For information, call Joyce Gatlin at (785) 460-3656.

### High school play next week

The annual Colby High all-school play, "Iphigenia," will be performed at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Nov. 13-14, at high school auditorium. A Greek pasta dinner will be served from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. before the Friday performance. Tickets for the play only are \$5 for adults and \$4 for Colby School District students and children. Tickets for the dinner theater are \$10 and \$8. For information, call Nancy Rundel at (785) 460-5300.

### Auction will benefit Hospice

Hospice Services' "Dream, Act and Believe" Banquet and Auction will be Saturday at City Limits Convention Center in Colby. There will be a social hour at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:30 p.m. and auction at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 each. For information, call 462-6710.

### FFA members selling fruit, meat

The Colby FFA is conducting its annual Rivestart fund raiser, selling fruit and smoked meats through Monday. Delivery will be Wednesday, Dec. 10. To order, contact an FFA member or advisor Shawna Howell at (785) 460-5320 or showell@colbyeagles.org.

### Flu shots available on Monday

The Thomas County Health Department will be offering flu shots at the office on Range from 9 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m. Monday. The cost is \$25. For information, call the department at (785) 460-4596.

### Genesis offers food baskets

Genesis-Thomas County Food Bank will be providing holiday baskets to families again this year. To receive a basket, pick up a form at the office at 350 S. Range, Suite 13, in Colby by Saturday, Nov. 8. The

office is open from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays, or call (785) 460-7930.

### Outdoor water will be expensive

Colby water meters will be read on Thursday, Nov. 20. All water used between then and Feb. 20 will be used to figure indoor use for next year's sewer bill. This means any outdoor use during the winter, such as lawn watering or washing a car, might drive up your sewer bill for the entire year. For questions, call 460-4400.

### Endowment Foundation to meet

The Colby Community College Endowment Foundation will hold its annual meeting at 6 p.m. Monday in the Student Union, including scholarship dinner and reception for students and donors. Everyone is welcome and there is no charge. Call foundation Director Nick Wells at (785) 460-4684 for information.