



10 pages

COLBY FREE PRESS

50¢

Wednesday

November 26, 2008
Volume 119, Number 188
Serving Thomas County since 1888



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Jay Knopp (above), an auctioneer for Farm and Ranch Realty, pointed to the crowd as he took bids from farmers and ranchers at the firm's twice-a-year consignment auction on Saturday. Auctioneer Lance Kinderknecht talked on the microphone. Knopp (below) worked the crowd, while a man (at left below) scanned the sale and a woman talked on the phone.



Auction a social, not just a sale

By Andy Heintz

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It is a scene of organized chaos. Auctioneers are talking 10 miles a minute while farmers and ranchers roam from place to place, looking for a good buy.

Some people are hauling away their new machinery with a look of satisfaction on their face while others take a break from the action to grab a hot dog from the food stand. You can hear people talking to their friends about

what a good buy they got, while other folks surround the auctioneer, hoping to outbid the competition.

The twice-a-year Farm and Ranch Realty consignment auction is more than just a gargantuan sale, it's a social event where farmers and ranchers can enjoy each other's company for a while. While there's no doubt the chance at getting a good deal is one of the big reasons people attend, people also seem to enjoy the atmosphere.

The scene at the auction is business-like to an extent, as the auctioneers do everything

they can to get the people to buy the stuff they have to sell, but you never feel like you are at a business meeting.

The firm had its annual fall auction its site on U.S. 24 west of Colby over the weekend. It drew about ?? people from across the High Plains.

Don Hazlett, owner of the firm, started the fall and spring auctions 25 years ago, said Office Manager Cindy Hake. People from all over come for the auctions, said Hake.

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Couple finds Christmas task a work of joy

By Andy Heintz

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Chuck and Leilani Thompson are the fabric that has held Colby's Santa City together for nearly two decades now.

Since 1991, the couple has been a driving force in keeping this Colby Christmas tradition alive. Each year, they spearhead decorating the Christmas House (the Boy Scout house for the rest of the year) at Fike Park, where jolly old Saint Nick sits to hear the wishes of good little girls and boys.

"It represents the spirit of Christmas," Leilani said last week. "I can't imagine Colby without Santa City."

The couple stressed that the project involves several people each year, not just them.

"It takes a community to put together Santa City," Leilani said. "Santa City is important ... because so many people are involved in it."

They said that this year, the Colby Community College baseball and softball teams carried Christmas trees and boxes of ornaments and figures down to the building.

The Christmas trees used to decorate the building have been donated by people and businesses, Leilani said. This year, Wal-Mart donated Christmas trees, Christmas figures and decorations, Dillon's donated decorations and Some Place Special donated figures to the display.

The display is not just geared for children, she said. Adults should come see Santa City, too.

The Christmas house's theme this year is the Western Winter Wonderland. Bears are everywhere. There are bears in cowboy hats, bears driving cars, bears taking a bath, bears having a hoe-down, bears playing a guitar while

Schedule rings bell

Here are some holiday happening for your calendar:

- Santa City will open for the season from 1 to 5 p.m. Friday. It will be open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday until Christmas from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- The Colby Women's League will hold its annual holiday brunch from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 4, at the Colby United Methodist Church.
- The second annual Holiday Craft and Gift fair will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, at the Colby Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, 220 Lake Street.
- Colby's 11th annual Christmas Light Parade will begin at 5:45 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7. People who want to enter the parade should register by Friday, Dec. 5. The theme is Western Winter Wonderland.
- Starting Monday, Dec. 15, Santa City will open week nights from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

camping under the stars and one bear relaxing with some popcorn while watching a John Wayne movie. Santa City is jammed with Christmas trees decorated with cowboy hats.

The couple had similar answers when they were asked what their favorite thing about being a part of Santa City was.

"The kids mainly," Chuck said. "Sometimes you wonder why you do it," Leilani added, "but when you see the excitement on a child's face, it makes it all worthwhile."



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Leilani Thomas, director of the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau, sat on his lap and tempted Santa (her husband Chuck Thomas) during a light moment at Colby's Santa City this week.

Briefly

City, county offices to close

The Thomas County Courthouse, county office complex and landfill will be closed and the transportation bus will not run Thursday and Friday for the Thanksgiving holidays. Colby city offices will be closed both days and there will be no trash pickup. Trash service will catch up and the landfill will be open on Saturday.

Paper for Wednesday early

The Colby Free Press for Wednesday has been printed a day early, on Tuesday. Papers are being delivered and mailed on Tuesday. No paper will be distributed on Wednesday. The Free Press office will be

closed Thanksgiving Day. Publication will resume on Friday. Deadline for the Friday paper is 3 p.m. Wednesday for news.

Ladies Association to meet

The Meadow Lake Ladies Association will meet at the Meadow Lake Golf Club for refreshments at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 2, followed by a meeting at 7 p.m.

Women's League offers brunch

The Colby Women's League will hold its annual holiday brunch from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 4, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Donations will go to support the Thomas County Historical Society and the High Plains Museum. For information or questions, call Sandy Harper, 462-3759, or any of the league members: Pat Criss, Jo

Booth, Anita Hills, Sandy Kriss, Melany Shalz, Sidney Strait, Carol Jo Sweat, Becky White or Esther Woolfer.

Craft fair Dec. 6 at vets' hall

The second annual Holiday Craft and Gift fair will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, at the Colby Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, 220 Lake Street, said Patty Drake of Nanna's Comfort Foods, the sponsoring agent. She expects more than 20 tables of gifts and holiday ideas. A concession stand will be available all day, serving breakfast burritos, cinnamon rolls and sandwiches. For information, call Drake at 460-3054.

Group selling cookies, candy

Kappa Upsilon sorority of Colby will hold a cookie and candy sale from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec.

13, at the Colby Community Building. The group will have a selection of both cookies and candy to choose from. Proceeds go to community projects.

Emergency med class planned

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services will be offering an emergency medical technician B class starting in January. Classes will run for five to six months and financial assistance is available. For information, call training coordinator Dawnelle Umberger at (785) 460-4585 or 443-0176.

Center offers lunch for seniors

The Thomas County Nutrition Center is open to those 60 and older and their guests to have lunch at noon Monday through Friday at the Senior Progress Center in Fike Park. The cost is \$2.75 for those 60 or older and \$4.75 for others.



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