

# FREE PRESS

## Wednesday

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# City pushing owners to fix their houses

#### By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press aheintz@nwkansas.com

KBC Dirt Ventures, a contractor hired by the city, finished demolishing what was left of the old house at 345 S. School Ave. on Wednesday.

The City Council also has declared a house at 505 S. Lincoln Ave. unfit for habitation. The house is owned by Michael Lewallen, said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong

"There appears to be an issue with the structural foundation of the house," said Armstrong.

of violation for the house at 1860 S. Range Ave. because of conditions allegedly in violation of the the owner can be fined or even get environmental code at its meeting a jail sentence. on Tuesday, Feb. 3.

house on Range, but the yard that is not being maintained. She said See "HOUSING," Page 3

the city finds about three to six people in violation of the muncipal code each year.

"The majority of people work with us and get things cleaned up," the manager said.

The city has two legal methods to pressure people to take better care of their property, officials say

According to the municipal code developed by the League of Kansas Municipalities and approved by the City Council, the government can declare a house to be a dangerous or unfit structure, which can lead to demolition if the owner does not make repairs. Or The council authorized an order the council can rule that a property violates the environmental code, an ordinance under which

According to the municipal Armstrong said it is not the code, houses the city can deem

## Seniors use skills to help agencies

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press aheintz@nwkansas.com

Kansas Retired and Senior Volun- lips, Logan and Sheridan counties. teer Program are proving that the Withington said there are about elderly can fill vital roles in their 350 volunteers, with and 150

to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. each Wednesday, along with numerous other activities. The organization includes se-

Volunteers in the Northwest nior citizens from Thomas, Philcommunity if they get the chance. members from Colby. The group



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Senior Avalon Verrijken (above) picked up trash on Monday on South Range Avenue near McDonalds, just north of I-70, as part of Random Acts of Kindness Week. Senior Kristina Kirby (below) showed off the Colby High colors .

Students clean up land as their random kindness

## Sheriff beefs up patrols

Burglaries, thefts reported in counnty

### By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press colby.society@nwkansas.com Thomas County Sheriff Rod Taylor says his office has increased the number of officers on patrol af a recent rise in criminal damage to property, burglaries and domestic violence in the county.

In an interview Monday, Taylor said a recent criminal damage to property incident has been the biggest one here in all of his nearly 10 years with the sheriff's office.

He said a farm southwest of Colby reported thousands of dollars in damage to a computerized grain drying system. Vandals shot out lights, then broke in and smashed computer boards which controlled the drying system for grain storage.

On Jan. 19, he said, someone broke into Frontier Ag in Oakley, just over the county line. Though nothing was taken, the sheriff said, there was damage from the entry.

Also in the Oakley area, the sheriff said, there was evidence of someone attempting to remove a battery from a Summers Township road grader parked at the property of grader operator Roland Cooper. Lights were shot out there also.

Taylor said his office increased the numbers of officers on patrol this past weekend. The message he wants to get out, especially to farmers, he said, is to report anything suspicious.

"Generally, if anything looks suspicious, it is suspicious," the sheriff said, "and the sooner a report is called in, the sooner an officer can be on the scene to avert the crime or begin an investigation."

The program provides help for is available for people 55 or over, nonprofit groups all over town, she said. Retired and working sesaid Director Laura Withington.

The 150 Colby seniors affiliated with the volunteer organization can be seen selling tickets at Colby Community College athletic events, helping first and second graders write letters at Colby Grade School, knitting and crocheting baby booties and caps for newborns at the Citizens Medical Center, working as greeters and cashiers at the hospital, distributing food for Genesis-Thomas County Food Bank from 10 a.m. niors both are encouraged to join. Seniors are not required to pay any membership fees and they can volunteer at jobs they like, said Withington.

"You've learned a lot in 55 years," she said. "Don't keep it to yourself.'

The wisdom she has learned from seniors is something that Withington says she has enjoyed over her 26 years working for the

See "SENIOR," Page 3

## Groups wants people to report all kindness

The Thomas County Commu- this week, said foundation Exnity Foundation is encouraging ecutive Director Melinda Olall Thomas County citizens and son, call her at (785) 460-9152. businesses to go the extra mile for their fellow citizens this foundation so that we may honweek, which is National Ran- or the good deeds in our comdom Acts of Kindness Week.

The foundation website at www.actsofkindness.org.

If you see an act of kindness Feb. 20.

"Feel free to report it to the munity," Olson said.

The foundation will give a www.thomascountycommu- presentation of these good deeds nityfoundation.com has some at an open house at the Thomas ideas, or go to the national site County Office Complex conference room at 10 a.m. Friday,



#### By Andy Heintz

#### Colby Free Press aheintz@nwkansas.com

Members of the Colby High chapter of Students Against Destructive Decisions picked up trash Monday on South Range Avenue near McDonalds, just north of I-70, as part of Random Acts of Kindness Week.

Wearing orange vests and equipped with trash bags, seniors Jordan Kryzycki, Avalon Verrijken and Kristina Kirby meandered around the vacant land near the restaurant, picking up any trash that happened to catch their eye. The girls managed to stay enthusiastic through what some would consider a boring, monotonous task in 56-degree weather and a stiff north wind.

"We want to clean up the city to help improve the city's appearance," said Brock Fairbrother, co-sponsor of the organization. (The other sponsor is Melissa Augustine.)

Fairbrother described the organization as an anti-drug and anti-alcohol group that tries to promote positive ways for students to spend their time. He said the chapter has about 20 members.

He warned farmers who own vacant properties to be alert.

"Remember to always remove keys from vehicles," Taylor said. "If anything is stolen, reporting it immediately makes the odds better in solving the crime."

Activity in a nine-county area east of Selden is a big concern, the sheriff said, which includes a robbery at the store in Selden.

Taylor said four wheelers are becoming a problem in the Levant area, where sometimes riders tear up fields and disturb quiet neighborhoods.

On Monday, he said, between 8 and 11:30 a.m., someone broke into a house on K-25 north of town. He said the thieves made off with several thousand dollars worth of jewelry.

Taylor said he's worried that people may not be reporting domestic violence they suspect involving adults or children. He said if someone calls in to report a suspected incident, the caller is not required to identify themselves.

"Kids are victims of bad marriages, drugs and alcohol," he said, "and if it's not reported, it's the kids who suffer .... We don't like to think this can happen in Thomas County, but it can.

"Law enforcement agencies are only as strong as the public allows ... because of cooperation."

## Briefly

## Sorority selling soup at game

Kappa Upsilon sorority will hold a soup supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, before the Colby Eagles-Dodge City basketball game at the Community Building. They will be serving chili, chicken-noodle and vegetable soup with homemade cinnamon rolls and cookies to benefit Puddle Duck Preschool.

## County van off Friday, Monday

The Thomas County transportation van will not run on Friday because the driver is on vacation that ships to attend Colby Community College. Money day, or on Monday, which is President's Day. All county offices, the landfill and the Health Depart- cial Law Enforcement Fund and the Cory R. Wang

ment will be closed Monday for the holiday. The van will resume service on Tuesday. For questions, call the county clerk's office at 460-4500.

## Library offers books for sale

Pioneer Memorial Library will hold its annual Book Lovers sale in the basement from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Come and browse and buy from a wide selection of used books.

## Justice scholarships available

The Thomas County Community Foundation is looking for applications for criminal justice scholarcomes from the Colby Police Department Spe-

> Memorial Scholarship. For an application, contact the foundation office at 350 South Range, Suite 14, in Colby. These must be postmarked by

Tuesday, March 10. Call Melinda Olson at 460-9152 for information.

## **Emergency planners to meet**

The Thomas County Local Emergency Planning Committee will meet at noon Thursday at the Law Enforcement Training Center, 360 N. Franklin. The group needs to talk about forming four subcommittees to meet state requirements, said Susan McMahan, county emergency management director. For information, call McMahan 460-4516.

## Academy students offer soup

Thomas County Academy teachers, parents and students will have soup at the Community Building on Friday. Soup and desserts will be served for a donation. Stop by check out displays of the students' work. Money raised will be used for a trip to explore Barnum, 462-6503.

the Butterfield Trail. For information, call Teresa Morgan at 460-5075.

## Dance team to help parents

The Colby High Dance Team wants to babysit for you on Valentine's Day. Bring your child, age 3 to 10, to the Community Building from 6 to 9 p.m. for open gym, games, snacks and movies. Cost is \$10 per child. The money may be used for a trip to the Liberty Bowl in Memphis next year. For information, call coach Denita Rodgers at 460-1325.

## Scout crew whips up pancakes

Boy Scout Venture Crew 157 plans a pancake feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Community Building. Donations will be used for trips and service projects. The group, part of Boy Scouts of America, is open to both boys and girls. For questions, call Jan