



10 pages

COLBY FREE PRESS

50¢

Wednesday

February 11, 2009
Volume 120, Number 23
Serving Thomas County since 1888

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.

The council authorized an order of violation for the house at 1860 S. Range Ave. because of conditions allegedly in violation of the environmental code at its meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 3.

Armstrong said it is not the house on Range, but the yard that is not being maintained. She said

the city finds about three to six people in violation of the municipal 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 can rule that a property violates the environmental code, an ordinance under which the owner can be fined or even get a jail sentence.

According to the municipal code, houses the city can deem

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Seniors use skills to help agencies

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Volunteers in the Northwest Kansas Retired and Senior Volunteer Program are proving that the elderly can fill vital roles in their community if they get the chance.

The program provides help for nonprofit groups all over town, said 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.

to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. each Wednesday, along with numerous other activities.

The organization includes senior citizens from Thomas, Phillips, Logan and Sheridan counties. Withington said there are about 350 volunteers, with and 150 members from Colby. The group is available for people 55 or over, she said. Retired and working seniors 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

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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

By Andy Heintz

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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 Kryzcycki, 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.

Groups wants people to report all kindness

The Thomas County Community Foundation is encouraging all Thomas County citizens and businesses to go the extra mile for their fellow citizens this week, which is National Random Acts of Kindness Week.

The foundation website at www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com has some ideas, or go to the national site www.actsofkindness.org.

If you see an act of kindness

this week, said foundation Executive Director Melinda Olson, call her at (785) 460-9152.

"Feel free to report it to the foundation so that we may honor the good deeds in our community," Olson said.

The foundation will give a presentation of these good deeds at an open house at the Thomas County Office Complex conference room at 10 a.m. Friday, Feb. 20.

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 day, or on Monday, which is President's Day. All county offices, the landfill and the Health Department 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 scholarships to attend Colby Community College. Money comes from from the Colby Police Department Special Law Enforcement Fund and the Cory R. Wang 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

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 Barnum, 462-6503.