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Foundation eyes lures to get kids back

By Marj Brown

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How do we get our kids to come back to their home town after they have finished college?

That's a question community leaders in many small towns are asking nowadays. This "brain drain" is one of the reasons Thomas County, like many others in rural Kansas, has seen a steady decrease in population through the years.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Thomas County went from a population of 8,180 in 2000 to an estimated 7,314 in 2007.

This has alerted organizations such as the Thomas County Community Foundation to sit up and take notice of the fact our young people are not returning here to live and to work here after they have gone away to college.

Melinda Olson, executive director of the foundation, thinks

she has come up with some of the answers after attending a meeting about the Nebraska Community Foundation on Rural Philanthropy in Nebraska City last September. She said people in rural Nebraska have discovered that if they give back to the community, their town can grow and become a better place to live.

An editorial in the *Omaha World-Herald* on Sept. 11 reported, "The Nebraska towns of Pender and Thurston, with a combined population of 1,273, provide one example of how to successfully build a community endowment. The public school teachers in those communities have pledged \$100 annually in perpetuity to a founders club. That step inspired others to give as well. The result is that the fund has secured \$100-a-year commitments from 232 current and former residents."

"Stemming the tide of out-

migration is also the idea behind the creation of the foundation's Home Town Competitiveness collaborative. That effort emphasizes entrepreneurship, leadership development, youth engagement and building charitable assets and endowments. In Ord and Valley County (population 4,647), the pilot site for the collaborative, personal income increased 21 percent from 2000 to 2004, compared with a statewide average of 11 percent. Endowments and expectancies now total more than \$7 million. More importantly, population in that area has increased by 3 percent since 2000, the first increase since the 1930s."

Olson says a similar endowment could help bring graduates back to Thomas County if we use them to sponsor scholarships for students who plan to come back home to set up businesses and grants to help them get going.

Young people no longer have to worry about going to the city

See "GRADUATES," Page 3



M. Olson

Fair board to discuss bluegrass

The Thomas County Fair Board plans to meet with the Pickin' on the Plains Committee at its monthly meeting at 8 p.m. tonight at the 4-H Building at the fairgrounds. A contract for the festival is on the agenda.

The board wants to discuss campground rates for the bluegrass festival July 17-19. This discussion may also include the limited amount of camping space which may be available, because of long-term campers currently staying at the fairgrounds, and problems reported with misters on campers making the area muddy.

Also up for discussion will be repairs done to the solar building and fence in the southwest corner of the fairgrounds. The agreement with the Kansas Professional Rodeo Association, fair themes, demolition derby, fair book and advertising will be brought up.

New business includes the Colby Community College rodeo contest. The meeting is open to the public.

GM sees daylight, turns down a loan

DETROIT (AP) — General Motors Corp. says its restructuring plan is starting to take hold, improving the automaker's fortunes at least to the point that it won't need a \$2 billion government loan installment that it had requested for March.

Chief Financial Officer Ray Young said today that GM told the Obama administration's autos task force on Wednesday that it wouldn't need the money this month. But in an interview with The Associated Press, Young would not say when the struggling automaker would need more government money or whether it will reduce the size of its loan request.

"It seems like our companywide cost reduction efforts are moving well, as well as we've been able to defer spending that we previously

anticipated in January and February," Young said. "I think that's a positive development."

GM, which is living on \$13.4 billion in government loans, has requested another \$16.6 billion as it tries to weather the worst auto sales slump in 27 years.

Young said GM's cash burn rate, the amount of spending above revenue, has slowed since the company submitted a viability plan to the government on Feb. 17.

He would not say if GM will need another loan draw in April. In its viability plan filed Feb. 17, GM asked for \$2 billion in March and another \$2.6 billion in April. It would not need any more money until 2011 when a \$4.5 billion revolving line of credit comes due.

GM shares were up 15 cents, or 8 percent, to \$2.01 at midday.

College sets fund raiser for first April weekend

The Colby Community College Endowment Foundation will have its annual scholarship benefit auction Saturday, April 4, at the City Limits Convention Center.

The theme for this year's benefit is "How the West Was Fun."

Dinner will be at 5:30 p.m. and the live auction will be at . Doors will open at 4:45 p.m.

Tickets are \$35 per person or \$250 for a corporate table of eight. For reservations, call (785) 460-4684.



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby Fire Chief Bob McLemore checked the pump one of the department's trucks Wednesday afternoon. Lt. Don Phillips (left), Shift Firefighter Scott Hilbrink (middle) and McLemore went over the day's plans in the temporary fire house, the Kansas National Guard Armory.

Fire department ready for move to new station

By Andy Heintz

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The Colby Fire Department has had to make some adjustments since a collapsed roof forced the trucks out of City Hall and into the Kansas National Guard Armory building more than two years ago.

Heavy snow Dec. 31, 2006, collapsed the roof of the fire-station addition on the north side of City Hall, said Assistant Fire Chief Sean Hankin. Working out of temporary quarters has some drawbacks, he said, but nothing the men can't work around.

"It's a lot of minor things," said Lt. Don Phillips. "In the old building, we didn't have to worry about locking up before we left. It adds a couple of minutes."

While some aspects of the department's move have been cumbersome, some positive things have come from moving into the armory, the men said.

"We have more room around the fire trucks," said Chief Bob McLemore.

Phillips said the National Guard, especially Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Allen, who is in charge of the Armory, have been accommodating. Allen said he had met a lot of people through the firemen.

Even though things have gone well since the move, the fire fighters — both the six full-time city employees and the volunteers — can't wait to get into the new station on Country Club Drive.

McLemore said he will be happy when all the

firefighters are under one roof. Right now, his office and Hankin's are at City Hall, while everyone else reports to the armory.

Hankin said the new station would allow a better flow of information during day-to-day operations, since everyone would be under the same roof. He also said the new station will be better equipped to handle the responsibilities of today's fireman.

"The role of the fire department has changed over the last five or six years," he said. "We are more emergency oriented and more hazardous-material oriented than we use to be. It's about more than handling a hose and putting water on a fire. The new building will allow us to house the equipment needed to perform these operations."

Hankin said the new station was designed to allow room for growth. He said it will have around 17,000 square feet, costing about \$2.5 million.

"We're pleased with the work Miller Construction has done," he said, "and I see no reason why this building can't house us for the next 50 to 75 years."

Shift Firefighter Scott Hilbrink said he is looking forward to the camaraderie that he believes will develop when all the firefighters can work under one roof.

Hankin said there is still a lot of work to do on the new station. While the building is enclosed, there's a lot of finishing to complete, along with some concrete and landscaping.

McLemore said he thought the department could start moving in within a month,

Financier Madoff pleads guilty in \$65 billion 'Ponzi' scam

NEW YORK (AP) — Saying he was "deeply sorry and ashamed," Bernard Madoff pleaded guilty today to pulling off perhaps the biggest swindle in Wall Street history and was immediately led off to jail in handcuffs to the applause of his seething victims in the courtroom.

U.S. District Judge Denny Chin denied bail for Madoff, 70, and ordered him to

jail, noting that he had the means to flee and an incentive to do so in his age.

Madoff earlier spoke softly but firmly to the judge as he pleaded guilty to 11 charges in his first public comments about his crimes since the scandal broke in early December.

"I am actually grateful for this opportunity to publicly comment about my

crimes, for which I am deeply sorry and ashamed," he said.

"As the years went by, I realized my risk and this day would inevitably come. I cannot adequately express how sorry I am for my crimes."

Madoff did not look at any of the three investors who spoke at the hearing, even when one turned in his direction and tried

to address him.

The fraud, which prosecutors say may have totaled nearly \$65 billion, turned a revered money man into an overnight global disgrace whose name became synonymous with the economic meltdown.

Madoff described his crimes after he entered a guilty plea to all 11 counts he was charged with, including fraud, per-

jury, theft from an employee benefit plan, and two counts of money laundering.

He told the judge that he believed the fraud would be short-term and that he could extricate himself.

Prosecutors say the disgraced financier, who spent three months under house arrest in his \$7 million Manhattan penthouse, could face up to 150 years in prison.

Briefly

Daffodils delivery to be Friday

Bad weather on the West Coast delayed daffodil harvest, said Jennifer Van Eaton, community manager in Colby for the American Cancer Society. Flowers arrived in Colby today, with delivery set for Friday. For questions, call 460-3684.

Students plan massage clinic

Colby Community College therapeutic massage students will have a pediatric clinic on Saturday. Children must be accompanied by a parent or adult. Cost is \$15. For information or an appointment, call Carol Johnson, program director, at (785) 460-5427.

Food sign up to be this week

Prairie Land food sign up will be this week at the State Farm Insurance office, 905 E. Fourth. A food package is available at a reduced rate in return for volunteer hours. Specials are available each month.

Delivery will be Saturday, March 28, at the Sacred Heart School Gym, 1150 W. Sixth St. For information, call 460-3579.

Scout crew plans craft fair

Boy Scout Venture Crew 157 will hold a craft fair in cooperation with Colby's Home and Garden Show Friday to Sunday, March 27-29. There is room for more crafters to attend this event. For information, call Jan Barnum at 462-5892.

Free tax help offered at library

Free tax help will be available for with low- and middle-income taxpayers, with special attention to those 60 and older, from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays through April at the Pioneer Memorial Library. The program is sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons. Call 460-2645 for information.

Brother, sister to tell stories

Ray Imhoff and his sister, Doris Johnson, who will present a collection of stories from their mother from noon to 1 p.m. next Thursday at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. The talk is a last of the Food for Thought series. Call the museum at (785) 460-4590 for details.

Support group to meet

Living a full life with disabilities is the topic of a support-group meeting from 1:30-3 p.m. Friday at the Colby United Methodist Church high school classroom. The group is for people with mental and physical disabilities and caregivers. For information, call Doug Finley at 460-2306 or Connie Menges at 460-3112.

Meal delivery helpers needed

The Senior Progress Center is looking for two

volunteers to help deliver meals to the home bound. Deliveries are from 10:30 to noon every Monday for every other month beginning in April. For questions, call director Kaila DeBoer at 460-2901.

Group offers family portrait

Thomas County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council is offering a 10-inch-by-13-inch portrait of your children for a \$10 sitting fee. Sepia tone portraits, said to be a \$90 value, will be taken with vintage attire and props. Portraits will be taken by appointment on Saturday, March 21, at the Colby Community Building. For information or to reserve a sitting, call 462-6111.



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