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Vera Sloan/Colby Free Press

The Spirit of Christmas was evident by the look on Sean Hankin's face when he adjusted the last ornament tag on the Kiwanis Club "Toy Tree" on Thursday at Dollar General. Hankin, president of Colby Kiwanis, said the group's motto is "serving

the world, one child at a time," and providing toys for children in need is a favorite way of serving. Shoppers can shop for a child by picking an ornament from the tree from now through Dec. 4.

Colby Kiwanis hangs tree with care

By Vera Sloan

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If you'd like to make a child's Christmas, the Kiwanis Toy Tree give people a chance to buy toys and gifts for kids who might otherwise not have anything.

"Our community has between 160 and 200 kids on the needs list this year, a few less than last year," said Sean Hankin, president of the Colby Kiwanis Club, "and our goal is to meet some of those needs."

In October, he said, information gathered through Genesis-Thomas County food bank identifies kids with needs. The gender and

age of each child are put on an ornament and hung on the tree at Dollar General by Kiwanis Club. Volunteers are careful never to reveal the names of the children.

People can stop by the store and pick up an ornament with the information they need to go shopping wherever they please.

An ornament may be in the shape of a teddy bear, with the legend, "girl, 2 years," or a star that will have the words, "boy, 9 years." The shopper can buy an appropriate toy for the gender and age, and drop it off at Dollar General with the tag.

Hankin said volunteers will pick up toys from the project the evening of Friday, Dec. 4, before the store closes.

At 6 p.m., Monday, Dec. 7, at the 4-H building, volunteers will wrap all the toys in bright Christmas paper. Anyone who wants to donate wrapping paper or who wants to help wrap is invited to be at the 4-H building that evening.

Gifts will be distributed to the families on Dec. 12, Hankin said, in plenty of time for Christmas.

"The focus of Kiwanis is to serve the world, one child at a time, said Hankin, and "Dollar General has been a wonderful partner for us in this project.

"We team up with the fire department and

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City mulls power, water rate increases

By Kevin Bottrell

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The Colby City Council is wondering what its citizens think about an increase in their electric and water rates.

While a consultant recommended steep increases in both power and water rates, the city administration is asking for an increase in power charges of 20 to 25 cents per month. Water rates are another story.

The consultant recommended increases averaging 54 percent, and the staff came in with new charges near that number.

The city staff proposed the changes at the council meeting Tuesday. City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the city hasn't raised rates in 15 years, and revenue is falling behind as expenses keep going up. The number of users has remained fairly constant, she said, so there are few new people to help pay increased costs.

She noted that she has recommended rate increases to the council in previous years, but had been told it wasn't a good time.

"It's not going to be a good time this time either," she added, "but it's needed."

Councilman Tim Hutfles said he had not had enough time to review the city's rate study to form an opinion. Hutfles said he wanted the public to be informed and have time to give the council some input before voting on any rate increases.

"This table is the one who is ultimately answerable to the community," he said.

The council agreed to table the increases until the meeting Tuesday, Dec. 1. If approved, they would go into effect on Jan. 1.

Armstrong said Jerry McKenzie of the consulting firm MGT of America recently completed a study of the city's utility rates. The study found that electric utility fund expenses for 2008 were \$5.86 million while expenses were \$6.4 million. Under the current rate structure, the study estimates that revenue will drop by about \$17,000 next year while expenses will rise by about \$915,000. By 2011, the surplus in the electric fund would be gone, the report says, and by 2020, the fund would be nearly \$15 million in debt.

The study suggested a 25.9 percent rate increase to maintain the surplus in the electric fund.

The city currently charges a monthly meter charge of \$3.20 in the summer and \$3.25 in the winter for residential customers, \$9.56 year around for commercial and \$22 for industrial.

Colby's current charge per kilowatt hour is \$0.0928 for residential, \$0.0878 for commercial and \$0.0711 for industrial. Industrial users also pay a demand rate of \$5.25 for every kilowatt of peak power use. Armstrong said the lower industrial rate is typical of smaller towns that want to keep costs low and promote growth.

The administration is recommending power rates much lower than the consultants. The residential monthly meter charge be increased from \$3.20 or \$3.25 to \$3.45, the commercial charge from \$9.56 to \$10.50 and the industrial charge from \$22 to \$23.65. The power rates would remain unchanged, but the demand rate for industrial users would go to \$7.25 per kilowatt. These increases would raise \$176,568, the manager said.

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New group at Colby High aims to help the less fortunate

By Andy Heintz

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Students formed a new group determined to help the needy at Colby High School a few weeks ago.

The Young Humanitarians just completed a project that's part of Operation Christmas Child, run by Samaritan's Purse, a nonprofit evangelical organization run by Franklin Graham, son of the preacher Billy Graham.

The project, "How to Pack a Shoe Box," involves putting gift items in a shoe box that will be shipped to needy kids around the world. People are encouraged to include hygiene items, clothes, toys, school supplies, watches, candy, and maybe a personal note and photo of yourself in the boxes. People also are asked to include a \$7 check in an envelope on top of the other items to pay for shipping.

Faculty Advisor Rick Williams said the group packed 12 boxes.

"Lynn Carpenter, attendance secretary and cheerleader coach, and I put together one shoe box and the students did the rest," said Williams. "The kids paid

for everything with their own money."

Williams said he delivered the boxes to the Colby Berean Church at 1000 S. Franklin Ave. on Wednesday. The church is a collection center for the charity. Volunteers will ship the boxes to the nonprofit group's main office in Boone, N.C.

Williams said sophomore Megan Schroeder and juniors Brittany Bange and Caitlyn Wark worked to form the group and initiating the activities done so far. Schroeder is the group's president, Wark is the vice president and Bange is the secretary. Williams said that so far 30 students have signed on.

The organization will do a "Beds for Nigeria" project to help raise money to provide beds for a school in Nigeria.

"They sleep 10 to 12 people to a room on pieces of foam and cardboard," he said.

Williams said the group wants to have a day when the students come to school in pajamas and donate \$2 each to the help pay for the beds. He said he hopes the money can be sent before Christmas.

The organization will also be helping with the

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An early turkey day



ROBIN TUBBS/Colby Free Press

Sacred Heart School kicked off the Thanksgiving season with a turkey dinner Wednesday. Pictured are (from left) Craig Reed, Doris Reed, Tanner Reed, Keith Reed, Karen Reed, A.J. Reed, Kelly Miller, Tyson Miller and Jake Tubbs. The school served 117 guests.

Briefly

Venture Scouts plan feed, fair

Colby Boy Scouts Venture Crew 157 will hold a pancake feed from 6:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and a craft fair from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building. Donations will be accepted, with proceeds going to Scout service projects and activities. For information, call Jan Barnum at 462-6503.

Care center plans family dinner

Colby Care Center will be holdings its annual Thanksgiving dinner for family and residents with all the fixin's at noon Saturday. For information, call the center at 462-6721.

Health department office to close

The Thomas County Health Department will be closed Monday and Tuesday. The staff will be at area

schools giving H1N1 flu virus vaccine shots. For information, call the flu line at 460-4599.

Food bank needs donations

Genesis-Thomas County food bank needs nonperishable items for its Christmas Food Basket project. Drop them off at the office, 350 S. Range, Suite 13, between 10 a.m. and noon and 1 and 4 p.m. Wednesdays, or at Leroy's Printing, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, First Presbyterian Church, Colby United Methodist Church or Trinity Lutheran Church. For information, call the office at 460-7930.

Alliance to offer holiday service

The Thomas County Ministerial Alliance will sponsor a Community Thanksgiving Service at 6 p.m. Sunday in the Frahm Theater at Colby Community College. Ministers and musicians from area

churches will team up for the event. Donations will be accepted to help with programs the alliance operates throughout the year. For information, call Jarrod Spencer at 443-2403.

Hospice plans event Saturday

The Thomas County Hospice Advisory Board plan "An Evening on Us" appreciation night from 7 to 9 p.m. Saturday at the Meadow Lake Golf Club. For information, call 462-7621.

Methodist youth cooking turkey

The Colby United Methodist Church's Senior High Youth Group will hold a Thanksgiving dinner from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday at the church. Donations will be used for the church's missions and ministries. For information, call Lisa Wilson at 460-2567.

Legion seeks deployed soldiers

The Colby American Legion Auxiliary is looking for soldiers deployed overseas to send holiday "care packages" to. If you have a family member or friend serving overseas, send information on where the auxiliary can send them a care package to Megan Quenzer at nmquenzer@st-tel.net or 443-3611 or Abby Barnett at abbyjo_82@yahoo.com or 694-1626 by Saturday. The auxiliary is accepting donations for things to go in the packages until Dec. 6, when the packages will be put together. For information, call Quenzer or Barnett.



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