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Landfill head responds to city's claims

By Vera Sloan
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Responding to allegations from the city of Colby, Thomas County Landfill Supervisor Larry Jumper met with the county commissioners on Friday at their end of the month meeting to bring them up to speed on what he called the “money tree facts.”

He told the commissioners the price per ton that the city pays for disposal at the landfill has remained fairly constant.

In his report he said that municipal solid waste (residential trash) is only a part of the waste that Thomas County handles for the city of Colby. Throughout the year, the landfill also processes concrete, construction and demolition debris, cover dirt, furniture, metal, millings, oil, pallets, trees and yard waste.

He gave a run down from 2005 to present for the city of Colby. The average figure was \$23.70 per ton for all waste received from the city. He also said that at the advisory meeting, the Thomas County Commissioners did not double the

price of “non compliant” municipal solid waste and construction and demolition waste loads.

“These fees have been in place since Thomas County took control of the landfill in 2001, and have been in the computer since that time, but those charges have never been charged to the city. They (the city) are a good customer and we are not going to make it a problem for them. The fees were charged to private haulers who violated the regulations in the past,” he said.

“So although the city of Colby’s tonnage has been going up yearly, they are paying the same as they have since 2005.”

The reason for the higher fees, Jumper said, is to encourage haulers to comply with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and Environment Protection Agency regulations.

“The regulations are law. For the landfill to continue to operate, we and our customers must comply with the law,” Jumper said.

Jumper also said that in the past if one of the city trucks was out of commission, the city would

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Just one small part of how Kansas works



AUBREY SPENCER/Colby Free Press

Colby Implement salesman Mark Smith demonstrated a variety of spray tips – used for spraying chemicals on fields – for the Colby Grade School students during their Kansas Day celebration Friday. The students spent all day learning about historical and current Kansas topics such as government, farming and horses as well as participating in hands-on activities.

U.S. Defense secretary named Kansan of the Year

By John Milburn
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Citing the example of his parents, teachers and fellow Kansan Dwight D. Eisenhower, Defense Secretary Robert Gates praised his home state Friday for preparing him for the world.

“I will always consider myself first and foremost a kid from Kansas who got lucky,” he told a crowd of more than 500 in Topeka where he was honored as 2009 Kansan of the Year.

“I have now worked for eight presidents. Whatever I have accomplished I

believe has been due to my Kansas roots and heritage. The boy left Kansas. But Kansas never left the boy,” Gates said, breaking into tears to close his remarks.

The honor was presented by the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas during celebration of the state’s 149th birthday. The organization works to preserve Kansas history and presents the award annually on the anniversary of statehood.

Gates was born in Wichita and graduated from Wichita East High School. He grew up in the 1940s and 1950s traveling the state with his parents, and life revolved around family. He also became

emotional recalling track coach Bob Timmons and lessons Timmons taught about how to treat people, something Gates said he tries to emulate in the Pentagon.

“What is special about us as a breed is something of a well-kept secret,” he said of Kansans.

Gates has served as defense secretary since 2006, first under President George W. Bush and now in the administration of President Barack Obama. He served in the U.S. Air Force, stationed for a time at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.

Gates recently returned from Pakistan, where he held talks on putting more pres-

sure on the Taliban along the border with Afghanistan. On Friday, he was joined at the event by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, former Democrat governor of Kansas.

During his remarks, Gates spoke briefly about the current U.S. wars, saying Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth in Kansas were both playing a key role in deploying soldiers to combat and preparing the next generation of officers for leadership.

Regarding Eisenhower, Gates the former general and president demonstrated “prudence and levelheadedness” at a time when the Kansan was trying to satisfy his

superiors, maintain civility between the branches of the military and gain respect of U.S. allies.

“In the end, Ike didn’t do too badly,” Gates said. “But the true marvel was President Eisenhower’s determination that we ought not buy more for defense than we really need, an arena where his credibility was unchallengable.”

Previous Kansans of the Year have been Russell native and 1996 Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole, and Fort Scott native Gordon Parks, who became known as a photographer, activist, filmmaker and writer.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Whitney Shultz (middle) of Brewster helped explain to the rest of her Leadership Thomas County class what her group learned after pretending to be blind Wednesday. The class spent part of the afternoon seeing how hard it is for disabled people to get around town.

Leadership class teaches teens to see how other people live

By Kevin Bottrell
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Shoppers and business owners may have thought it a little strange on Wednesday afternoon to see a group of teenagers wandering around downtown acting like they were blind, on crutches or in wheelchairs, but these teens were learning a valuable lesson in seeing the world from someone else’s shoes.

The 14 students – two from Brewster, four from Golden Plains and eight from Colby – are taking a class called Leadership Thomas County. The class meets four times for all-day sessions.

Leilani Thomas, one of the in-

structors for Leadership Thomas County, said the class consists of building up leadership skills such as cooperation, consensus building and recognizing diversity. Thomas said the class focuses on practical problem solving.

“This is how you can stop a problem; this is how you get things moving,” she said.

Wednesday’s lesson was one such practical exercise. The students were divided into groups. One group had to pretend to be on crutches, another in a wheelchair and a third group took turns pretending to be blind while their partners guided them. The idea, Thomas said, was to experience how people live who are born with these disabilities or get them later

in life, what difficulties they have and what they might do to adapt.

The students came back together after the exercise to have a group discussion on what they learned.

“Everyone was looking at us funny,” said Madison Gaiwith, who was in the wheelchair group.

Gaiwith said the sidewalks are often very uneven and, had she really been in a wheelchair, there are some downtown stores that she couldn’t get into. Negotiating around trees is also difficult, she said.

Students in the crutches group said there are many sewer grates in which someone could get stuck and many trees in the middle of

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Briefly

Low income tax help at library

The AARP will have a tax help seminar from 1:30 to 4 p.m. every Thursday from Feb. 2 to April 15 at the Pioneer Memorial Library. The seminar is designed to help low- and middle-income people with special emphasis on those age 60 or older. For more information, call Alvin Volk at (785) 460-2645.

Ag conference cancelled

The Ag Profitability Conference, originally scheduled for Wednesday, has been cancelled due to lack of registration. For information, call Clint Milliman at (785) 462-4582.

Grade school to offer book fair

The Colby Grade School Parent-Teacher Organization plans a “spring” book fair with the theme “Book Fair Diner – All You Can Read” from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday and

8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday at the school. The event will offer new releases, children’s classics, cookbooks and bestsellers for sale. Money raised will go back into the classroom for things like textbooks and teacher projects. For information, call the school office at (785) 460-5100.

Transit van to run short days

The Thomas County transportation van will run from only from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday because the driver asked for time off. For information, call Kristi Mann at the county clerk’s office, 460-4500.

Commodities distribution here

U.S. Department of Agriculture commodity distribution will be from 1 to 2 p.m. next Monday at the Senior Progress Center in Fike Park. Any eligible person can get these commodities, which will include

peanut butter, corn flakes, vegetable mix, apricots, instant milk, orange juice and cherries. They will be distributed according to income guidelines on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants are asked to bring a sack or box. For information, call the Retired Senior Volunteer Program office at 462-6744.

Rotary to serve soup at game

The Colby Rotary Club will hold its annual soup supper from 5 to 7:30 Tuesday, Feb. 16, at the Colby Community Building during basketball games with Goodland. The cost will be \$4 for adults and \$2 for children 12 and under. For information, call Sara Bryan at (308) 530-8363.

Girl Scout cookies on sale here

Girl Scout cookies are on sale through Sunday, March 7. If you don’t want to buy cookies for yourself, you can ask Scouts to deliver them to Genesis

Food Bank or Kansas military units and families. If you have not been offered cookies by Monday, call Mint Culver at 460-6005 or Penny Cline at 460-2929.

Start preparing for contest now

The Thomas County 125th will be holding a beard and bonnet contest from now until Oct. 9. For men, there will be prizes for the longest beard and mustache and for the most unique beard and mustache. For information, call Bob Renner at (785) 462-5279. For women, there will be prizes for the prettiest, most unique and craziest hats and bonnets. For information, call Kathy Calliham, (785) 462-2081.



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