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Words from the judge



Colby Community College vocal music director Dr. Phillip Shuman worked with members of the Hoxie Middle School girls' ensemble at the Middle School Music Festival on Wednesday. Shuman and band director Tony Schroer organized the event, which included students from Decatur County, Hoxie, Rawlins County, St. Francis, Quinter and Oakley schools.

DEBBIE SCHWANKE/Colby Community College

College board makes choice for president

When April rolls around, Colby Community College will have a new president.

Dr. Stephen Vacik, now vice president of instruction at East Mississippi Community College in Mayhew, was selected in a unanimous vote by the college's board at a special meeting Wednesday.

After the meeting, Interim President Dr. Max Heim, who consulted on the search, said he was excited by the board's choice.

"As a result of the extensive search, the board has hired a quality individual to lead Colby Community College for many years," he said in a press release this morning. "His academic credentials are stellar. His experience at two community colleges is a definite asset. In addition, his interpersonal skills as demonstrated at both schools are outstanding."

Vacik will be the fifth president of the two-year college. He succeeds Dr. Lynn Kreider, who resigned in September.

The board had narrowed the

field to four candidates: Vacik, Randy Smith, Charles Kater and Don Weiss, who all had interviews with the board and public question-and-answer sessions earlier this month.

In a press release, Vacik thanked the board and the people of Colby and Thomas County.

"I do not accept the responsibility lightly, but rather with acknowledgment of the important role that Colby Community College must play in the present and future success of our district, state and region," he

said. "No doubt, we currently face challenging times in higher education, but working together, Colby Community College has greater days yet to come."

Before going to East Mississippi, Vacik was a teacher, coordinator and dean at Beville State College in Alabama. A native of Fargo, N.D., he grew up in Alabama and earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Alabama.



Stephen Vacik

Construction salesman announces write-in campaign

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkanas.com

At a small press conference Tuesday in the county courthouse, Larry McDonald, a salesman for Woofter Construction, announced he would be running as a write-in candidate for the Colby Community College board.

McDonald said his original plan was to file for the Tuesday, April 5, election right before the Jan. 25 deadline.

"It was a strategic thing," he said. "I wanted to see who else was running. But then I had some work commitments and I got there an hour and a half late."

McDonald said he had decided to just let it be until people around town asked him why he wasn't running. That's when he decided to run as a write-in.

McDonald said he served on the board from 2003 to 2007 and that experience would allow him to step in without missing a beat.

The college has some good things going for it, he said, including the nursing and dental hygiene programs, but it also has a lot of challenges, among them enrollment and community involvement.

"The college needs to be a part of the community and the community needs to be a part of the college," he said.

McDonald pointed to the recent public forums with the college's



Larry McDonald, along with his wife Iryna and their son Max, held a press conference Tuesday to announce his write-in campaign for the Colby Community College board.

KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

presidential candidates. He said he went to several and was disappointed with the attendance. If more people were invested in the college, he said, it would see more attendance at that type of event.

McDonald said he liked the candidates, particularly Randy Smith, director of the Rural Community College Alliance. McDonald said he agreed with Smith when he said that every employee of the

college must be a recruiter.

"Every teacher should try to bring in one or two students," he said, "whether they want to or not."

McDonald said the college board members should be around and interact with the students, but shouldn't micromanage the president and faculty. He said

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City council says no to alcohol at fighting event

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkanas.com

Spectators at the Ultimate Fighting event in March will have to stay sober as the Colby City Council has decided not to allow alcohol sales.

They voted down the measure at Tuesday's meeting. The Ultimate Fighting event will be March 19 at the Colby Community Building.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said she had been checking with other cities who have held similar fighting events. The city of LaCrosse told her they allowed alcohol sales and didn't

have any problems. Armstrong said she had also heard from several citizens who said they were excited about the event but did not want alcohol sold. She said the promoter, Randy Lang, had indicated that prohibiting alcohol sales is not a deal breaker, and the event will happen regardless.

The council voted 6-0 to prohibit alcohol sales. Council President Jim Brown and Councilman Tim Hutfles were not at the meeting.

Police Chief Randy Jones said he had talked with the promoter, who will be hiring two police officers for security at the event. Armstrong said Colby officers

are not allowed to moonlight, so the money will be paid to the city instead, who will pay the officers for their time.

The council renewed a discussion on how much to pay a supervisor for the new pool. Armstrong had provided the council with several suggestions including a lower fixed salary and a portion of the concession stand's profit. Councilman Omar Weber said the salary would be simpler without a concession's percentage, and it needed to be high enough to entice qualified people. The council voted to make the wages \$15 an hour.

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Legislators haggle over special ed

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback's budget director said Wednesday that the state may have to spend far more on special education programs to avoid a federal penalty, complicating budget negotiations that began with lawmakers split on whether to pay the public school costs.

Three senators and three House members had their first talks over the final version of a bill designed to trim overall spending from the current budget. Brownback is pushing for reductions so that the state can use the savings to help close a projected \$492 million shortfall for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

But the Senate doesn't want to trim as much as Brownback initially proposed or the House advocated in its version of the bill. The Senate's version commits to an additional \$26 million for special education programs.

Senators who support the extra spending argue it is necessary to prevent the U.S. Department of Education from cutting Kansas' allotment of federal funds. House members haven't conceded the point, with majority Republicans arguing that they can't stray too far from Brownback's proposals.

But the debate became more complicated when State Budget Director Steve Anderson said the cost

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Briefly

Writer to speak at library

Thomas Averill, writer-in-residence and associate professor of English at Washburn University, will speak at a brunch at 10:15 a.m. Friday at the Pioneer Memorial Library in celebration of Kansas' 150th anniversary of statehood. Averill is the editor of "What Kansas Means to Me: Twentieth-Century Writers on the Sunflower State." For information, call the library at 460-4470.

Rotary to feed game crowd

The Colby Rotary Club will hold a soup supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Community Building during the Colby High School basketball games against Norton. For information, call Gary Adrian at 460-2981.

College offers general ed classes

Colby Community College will have open enroll-

ment for General Educational Development courses from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 24, in the basement of the Davis Library at the college. The college is offering courses in the classroom and over the Internet in math, reading and technology. For information, call Jill Kriss at 460-5486.

Get a wellness check at Smoffee's

Thomas County emergency medical technician students will be performing wellness checks from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, at Smoffee's coffee shop. Checks include blood pressure and glucose. For information, call Dawnelle Umberger at 460-4585.

Learn life-saving info in March

Thomas County Emergency Medical Service will have a cardiopulmonary resuscitation information meeting for the public from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Wednesday, March 2, at Smoffee's coffee shop. It costs \$20 to be certified in the technique, but anyone can attend the meeting, even if they don't want to get certified. For information, call Dawnelle Umberger at 460-4585.

Storm spotter class here March 7

The National Weather Service will offer its annual Storm Spotter Class at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 7, downstairs at the Community Building. For information, call the Goodland weather office at (785) 899-7119.

Baptists offer eight-week study

The First Baptist Church plans a "40-Day Bible Adventure" program Thursdays from March 10 to April 21, covering the full sweep of the Bible story as it has played out in history. There will be two sessions, one from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. and another from

7 to 8 p.m., at the church, Grant and West Webster. Everyone is invited. Call 462-2867 or 462-2336 for information.

Senior group offering tax help

The American Association of Retired Persons will offer tax preparation help for low- and middle-income taxpayers — with preference to those 60 or older — by appointment until April 15. For information or to set up an appointment, call Earle Rice at 462-2990.

