



Taking shape



The new Colby Aquatics Center is taking shape on South Franklin Avenue. Passersby can now see several slides along with the finished parking lot and pool house. The center is on track for its May opening; one worker said the project may even be ahead of schedule.

KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Some area schools off for holiday

By Kevin Bottrell
Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansan.com

As if snow days weren't enough, a few area schools will be off on Monday for Presidents' Day. Sacred Heart Catholic School, Golden Plains and Triplains in Winona all have the day off. Colby Community College will not have class. Colby Public Schools, Brewster Schools and Heartland Christian School will have class. Presidents' Day is a federal holiday and federal offices, such as the Farm Service Agency, will be closed. Post offices will be closed and there will be no mail delivery Monday. State offices, such as the Colby Workforce Center, will be open. The Colby Driver's License Station is always closed on Mondays. County offices will also be closed, but city offices will be open and the trash pickup schedule will be unchanged. Banks will be closed except for the Dillon's branch of Farmers and Merchants Bank. The Senior Progress Center will be open but the transportation van will not be running. Presidents' Day is always celebrated on the third Monday of February, commemorating both George Washington's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays.

Colby FFA chapter plans week of festivities for students

By Kevin Bottrell
Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansan.com

Next week is National FFA Week, and the Colby High School chapter is planning a week of fun activities to show off what FFA is all about. One of the major events of FFA week each year is the appreciation breakfast put on by the students from 6:30 to 8 a.m.

Thursday in the high school commons. FFA member Derian Horinek, a junior at the high school, said the club will serve pancakes, sausage, bacon, orange juice, coffee and milk. The club will accept donations to help with club activities. Junior Kristian Mehl, chapter president, said the FFA will also put on an "Ag Olympics" contest for the high school and a presentation for Colby Middle School students about FFA programs. The club will also sponsor several dress-up days at the high school and a Drive Your Tractor to School day next Friday. Rundel said there are 30 students in FFA this year, including many new freshmen. Mehl said the FFA students participate in different agriculture-related programs throughout the year such as dairy, poultry, horse and livestock judging. This year, the students grew poinsettias and donated some of them to nursing homes.

Many of them helped build the new trailer for the National Honor Society chapter's recycling project. Mehl said the trailer was one of her favorite activities. Horinek, a first year FFA member, said she enjoyed dairy judging, having grown up around cattle. The FFA also has several fund raisers including concession stands at football games and selling fruits, meat and desserts.

Rundel said the FFA has several contests coming up: an ag mechanics contest on March 2 in Goodland and a horse judging contest on March 10. The state competition will be in May in Manhattan. Rundel said he will take several FFA members to compete in dairy and livestock judging.

Peruvian exchange students enjoys stay in Thomas County

By Vera Sloan
Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkansan.com

The trek from Lima, Peru, to Colby takes a long time, especially when 10 hours of that time is spent as a "layover" in the Miami airport. "That was the longest 10 hours of my life," said Lions International exchange student Lorena Manchego. "I would look at the clock, and then wait a while and look again and would think, 'my goodness, is that still the same minute?'" To say the least, she was happy to finally arrive at the Denver International Airport and meet her host parents, Wallace and Carol Severson of Gem.

Manchego said her father Manuel, one of the city administrators in Lima and her mother Blanca, a former police department employee, gave her permission to make the trip for her summer vacation. Manchego said she loves to travel, but the longest she had traveled before coming to the United States took her only 30 minutes away. Since her arrival in Colby



CAROL SEVERSON

One of the fun things 16-year-old Lorena Manchego (left) of Lima, Peru, got to do while she was in Colby was to take a 45-minute ride in a small plane. She said it was a first-time thing for her, and she loved it. Her pilot was Jared Bixenman (right) of Colby who flew a plane belonging to his dad, Ken Bixenman.

on Jan. 16, she's been to Kansas City, Junction City and Wichita. "I like Colby," she said. "It is so quiet here. Sometimes I want it to be quiet, but that can never be, because there are so many people."

She said Lima is a city of 29.5 million. School in Lima is much different than in Colby, she said. "We don't get to choose any of our classes, and classes begin at 7:30 a.m., but school is so interesting here, and it's so boring in my school," she laughed. School will begin for her the day after she arrives back in Lima, with no time to get rested from jet lag. She will be a senior and will attend university after she graduates from high school. Manchego's favorite high school subjects are science, chemistry and performing arts. She said when she gets to the university, she wants to study to become an emergency medical responder. The reason, she said, is that of the 25 categories of natural disaster, Peru experiences 24, and she wants to be in a medical career so she can help. "The only natural disaster we don't have is tornadoes," she said. Manchego said her country is diversified in that it goes from coastal climate to mountains and desert, plus there are 1,700 glaciers in Peru. Her country also boasts 16 distinct ecological areas. The Peruvians export cotton, potatoes, alpacas and llamas.

"It is so cold here," she said, "not so cold today, but when it's really cold I wear three jackets!" Although Tuesday was in the 50s, she said she was wearing two pairs of jeans to keep warm. When it comes to American food, she says: "it's so good." Her favorite is Wendy's and she wishes there was a Wendy's in Peru. "We have fast food in Peru - Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonalds, Bimbo's and pizza, but it is so expensive, we prefer eating at home," she said. She said you can't get a driver's license in Peru until you're 18, but there are clubs in her country for young people. "Old people and young people have different clubs, and that's good," she said. Manchego said she has made a lot of friends here, and made a list of all the people she has become friends with and couldn't believe how long her list is. "I'm glad I'm here," she concluded, "and I would like to come back." She will fly back to Lima on Sunday, Feb. 27, with only a two-hour layover in Miami this time.

Briefly

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 enrollment 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 downtown. Checks include blood pressure and glucose. For information, call Dawnelle Umberger at 460-4585.

Learn to save a life 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.

Apply now for foundation grant

The Thomas County Community Foundation is accepting applications for the "Kids Can Do!" The grants provide \$200 for nonprofit organizations or classrooms. Applications are due by March 1. For information, go to www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com or call 460-9152.

