



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Colby and Thomas County emergency responders lined their vehicles up along the side of Range Avenue on Sunday. The responders ran their lights and sirens for one minute to honor the police, firemen and paramedics who died in the World Trade Center attacks in 2001. The responders did two salutes at noon and again at 1 p.m.

Colby responders honor fallen comrades

By Kevin Bottrell

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Some of Colby's emergency responders gathered Sunday for a salute to the police officers, firefighters and paramedics who died at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

Representatives from the Thomas County Sheriff's Office, Thomas County Emergency Medical Services, Colby Police Department and Colby Fire Department lined up along

the east side of Range Avenue by Colby Community College at noon Sunday and again at 1 p.m. The responders turned on their lights and sirens for one minute while saluting the college's flag.

The salute was done by responders around the country at noon. Thomas County Sheriff's Deputy Tom Graham said some of the responders did the salute at noon, but they wanted to include more agencies such as the fire department and ambulance service, so they set it up again at 1 p.m..

The observance was one of several done over the weekend to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11. The Colby American Legion raised several hundred dollars for local first responders with a poker run and drag main Saturday night. At the performance of the U.S. Navy band Country Current on Sunday, Chief Musician Keith Arneson opened the night with a speech about 9/11. He recalled where each band member was when they heard about the attacks, and then asked for a moment of silence.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Mandee Sundquist (above, from left), Scott Hilbrink, Assistant Fire Chief Sean Hankin and his wife, Brette Hankin stood facing the American flag at Colby Community College. Responders, including Officer Sam Steele (right), saluted the flag for one minute.



Smart Start examining sidewalks

By Christina Beringer

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Seeking healthy lifestyles and adequate walking trails has become a priority of many of Colby's civic groups and organizations, and Smart Start of Northwest Kansas is one piece of the public health puzzle.

The nonprofit organization, which has an office in Colby, has designated one of its staff members to tackle evaluations that will hopefully impact the lives of Colby residents in a whole new way.

"Right now, I've been working on collecting data about the quality of sidewalks in Colby," explained project coordinator Megan Carmichael of Smart Start. "The data that we collect will be used in a Safe Routes to School program grant that, if received, will improve conditions of sidewalks and walking trails in Colby."

Carmichael said the end goal is to get kids walking and riding their bikes more and she needs help in making that happen.

"There are a lot of sidewalks in Colby, even more than you might realize, and most of them are not adequate for biking or for mothers with strollers," Carmichael said,

"and I need to recruit some volunteers to help collect data to make sidewalk conditions better."

She said the walkability checklists that she needs volunteers to help with are simple to complete. For example, as volunteers walk, all they have to do is note cracks in the sidewalk, unsafe intersections or a lack of a handicap access ramp.

"Volunteers can evaluate sidewalks during their walk, or after," said Carmichael. "The evaluation checklist has questions for ratings which help identify problem areas and how to determine possible solutions for improvements."

Not only is Smart Start compiling data from the walkability checklists, but it has also sent surveys home with school children for parents to complete and have enlisted classrooms in the Colby Grade School, Heartland Christian School and Sacred Heart School to fill out tally sheets.

Results from the three different types of evaluations are vital to the grant which is due in December. Carmichael said they should know by January if their application is accepted and will plan a community forum to decide how best to spend the money.

"We've already identified the intersection at Range Avenue near the middle school as being the



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

Megan Carmichael, a project coordinator with Smart Start of Northwest Kansas, evaluated a sidewalk on Fourth Street. This particular sidewalk is one of many in Colby that is difficult for people with bicycles, wheelchairs or strollers to use.

Colby family recalls 9/11 events

Steve Skiles: I remember that day very well, where I was and what I was doing, when I heard the news. I was west of Colby doing my job, when another employee came out from town. This guy was a classic joker who was never taken too seriously. Since I had no radio in my vehicle or in a nearby building, I had no idea what he was talking about as he told me what was happening.

I immediately thought to myself, "Okay, another one of his pranks!" However, as he continued telling me, he added more and more details he had been hearing on the radio. Finally, it sank in that he wasn't joking and it really happened. I sat down on the ground and felt like crying. I have not been the same since.

Randee Skiles: All I remember from that day is seeing the news station reporting about two smoking buildings before we went to school and standing in the lobby of school and praying with the upper classmen.

Sean Skiles: I remember, basically, what Randee remem-



By Jari Skiles

I was only 8 at the time.

Jari Skiles: Our kids were only 5 and 8 years old at the time, in kindergarten and third grade. I guess I figured all three would remember so much more! Actually, as I recall the day: it began as a beautiful, crisp, clear day. Steve was already at work. I was watching the news and as we left for school, the first tower was hit. I recall the anchors were a little shaken. We still had about five minutes before we absolutely had to leave, so we stood and watched. I thought to myself, "There must have been something wrong with the plane."

I took the kids to school. I told the secretary what happened, but she had heard it on

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