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New development director settling in

By Christina Beringer

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The city of Colby may have been reluctant to part with Aquatic Center Director Christy Rocca, but their loss is the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance's gain as she takes over as director. Coming from a 15-year real estate background in Phoenix, Rocca relocated to Colby in March to co-manage the new pool over the summer. She grew up in St. Francis and is a Colby Community College graduate.

Her first day at the alliance was Thursday. "The board and I are very excited about

Christy," said Dale Herschberger, alliance board president. "Her experience in real estate will be a great asset to us, especially since the housing market in Thomas County is getting a lot of attention right now."

"As an administrator of economic development, she'll be working hand in hand with other administrators of the city, Thomas County and anybody else with expertise in entrepreneurship."

Herschberger said they received resumes from several good candidates and the decision was tough.

"We are hoping for some good rapport,

especially as she begins meeting and greeting the public," he said.

Rocca said that is exactly where she has began her transition into the new position. She said Monday morning during the commissioner's meeting that one of her first visits was to the McCarty Dairy east of Colby. She was able to take a tour of the facility and meet employees there as well.

"I have been working a lot with Mayor Gary Adrian, who is so active in the community," Rocca said. "He, and everyone else I've met, has been so helpful and willing to make me feel welcome."

Rocca said although she'll have a learning curve in the new profession, her experience in real estate will help with networking and becoming familiar with the public and the local community. She said it will especially assist her in building relationships with banks to help entrepreneurs apply for small business loans.

She explained that being a catalyst for growth is the most rewarding part of the job that she is looking forward to.

Rocca's goals for the alliance include expanding the face of the organization. She said in her short time, she has learned that people in the area are unfamiliar with the office and are not aware of the resources available for small businesses in Thomas County.

Herschberger said he also hopes Rocca will take part in a major opportunity from the state level.

"First and foremost, we want her to get involved with the call center from the state of Kansas that the mayor is pushing for," he said. "There are a number of jobs we are hoping will get moved to Colby, but there's some work to get done before it can happen."

"She'll be good for the county. We are very excited to have her."

Rocca is taking over the position left by Rick Patrick in mid September. Her first board meeting will be on Thursday, Dec. 15, where she'll become more acquainted with the board's with short- and long-term goals.



Christy Rocca



CAMERON MCLAUGHLIN

Citizens turn out for light parade despite the cold

No falling snow, no wind and plenty of hot chocolate made the annual Christmas Light Parade on Sunday a success. Colby Fertilizer's entry (above) in the annual Christmas Light Parade was this lit-up truck and applicator, which won it the award for best business. The Thomas County Coalition won best organization for their float, which included a car that had smashed into a snowbank as a reminder to drive safe. Steve Molstad and his 1928 Ford firetruck won best lighted vehicle. Sacred Heart Catholic School won best religious entry for their float, which included some of the students singing Christmas carols. Colby Ag Center won the "Best Representation of Theme" award for their float, which included a sleeping man dreaming of getting farm implements for Christmas. The parade also included Santa and Mrs. Claus (right), pulled by farmer Dale Deaver in his classic truck rather than by reindeer.



Emergency services director details new training for medics

By Christina Beringer

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Joe Hickert – new director for Thomas County Emergency Medical Services – gave the county commissioners a briefing on his goals for the department at their meeting Monday.

"We have been busy revising protocols, policies and procedures," he said, "and they'll be ready by Friday to get approved by Dr. (Brewster) Kellogg and Brian (Unruh)."

Kellogg is the county's medical director, who has to approve any changes to guidelines and service, which are also regulated by the state. Unruh is his physician's assistant.

Included in Hickert's proposal will be plans to enhance the level of service given to every patient. Using an acronym to describe his plans, Hickert explained, "every-

one will get VOMIT'ed."

"Volunteers will check for Vitals, give Oxygen, Monitor, give IV and Transport," he said. "Giving the IV is the biggest change, since its been a number of years since an IV has been given in the field by EMS."

After the meeting, County Clerk Shelly Harms said she had seen the arms of Hickert and Don Morton, the department's assistant director, where they had been practicing on each other. She explained that before practice, Morton didn't know if he even remembered how to put an IV in.

"Your first time putting an IV in should not be under pressure on someone who is dehydrated," Hickert said. "Every patient will now be getting an IV and volunteers are also learning to think deeper and give differential diagnosis. For example, symptoms of a heart attack are different for a man than they are for a woman. The enhanced training will instill more confidence and more pride in our volunteers and medical personnel."

Hickert explained that in his profession, it is all about being prepared. He often asks, what could go wrong? In asking this question of the local department, the question resulted in revising their jump kits to ensure speedier and more efficient care to patients.

He showed commissioners photos of what their kits look like, what is in them and described their purpose. The bags, which are used for first response in an emergency, must include equipment and supplies to treat a wide variety of medical situations. Hickert found gaps in equipment, including items needed for pediatric care, which have now been added to the bags.

"The goal for the jump bags is to have everything you need at hand so you don't have to go back to the truck," said Hickert.

In addition to being better prepared, Hickert also said he hopes they'll be able to do more transports via ambulance, which saves money for patients who do not

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Group planning fund raiser at games

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Those feeling hungry and wanting to help out a local organization during the Colby High School basketball games Thursday can head downstairs to the Big Brothers Big Sisters soup and cinnamon roll dinner.

The dinner will be served from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Community Building. There will be five different types of soup. Donations will be accepted with proceeds going to Big Brothers Big Sisters. The organization is also asking people to bring non-perishable food items to go to the Genesis-Thomas County food bank.

Program Director Orvella Romine said during the dinner, the organization will be putting up its angel tree. Those interested can take an ornament and buy a gift for a local child. Gifts should be dropped off at the Colby United Methodist Church by Thursday, Dec. 15. After the supper, the tree will be set up at Dillon's.

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been active in Thomas County, including Rexford, Brewster and the rural areas, since 2000. Romine said there are 13 kids in the program, and the organization is actively looking for good matches for another 13.

The organization asks its big brothers and sisters to spend at least one hour a week with their younger counterparts, whether it's

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Getting rid of the pile



Colby crews were busy clearing piles of snow off the street this week. After a snowstorm, the city routinely piles snow in the middle of the street or to the side, and then removes the piles to Buffalo Park later.

KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press



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