

# Showdown offers a chance to shine

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press  
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Local vocalists and musicians can have a chance to grace the same stage as country music superstars such as Garth Brooks, Sara Evans, Leann Rhimes and Brad Paisley, said Sacha Sanguinetti, general manager at Rocking M Radio.

The same talent competition that launched the careers of these big names is coming to Colby for the first time, and people can come cheer for their favorite at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 1, at the Thomas County Fair grandstands. Admission to the family-friendly Texaco Country Showdown is free, Sanguinetti said.

"All of them competed, but coincidentally enough, I don't think any of these artists won," he said. "There are a lot of talent scouts who go to watch, so you don't have to win to make it big."

He added that in 2004, Scott City native Heather Shelley went on to nationals and won the whole competition.

He said about eight competitors had signed up as of this week to participate in the competition. The winner in Colby will move on to the state competition the next night in Goodland, on Thursday, Aug. 2.

"The Showdown representative said six competitors from throughout Kansas will compete in Goodland," said Sanguinetti, "so



Tammy Larson of Sharon Springs was just one of those on stage last year at Goodland's showdown.

Colby's winner will have a one-in-six chance of moving on to the regional competition."

Finally, the national competition will take place at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville with singer Rhimes as the host. The top prize

is \$100,000, Sanguinetti said.

He said he hand picked five judges who will remain anonymous, trying to get a healthy mixture of people with musical backgrounds.

"Not to throw any big hints, but, generally

I looked at people with musical backgrounds like teachers," he said. "Types of things the judges will look for on their judging form are marketability, vocal ability, stage presence, charisma and overall talent."

Competitors who perform their own music will start out the competition with a slight advantage, he added.

"There's a chance for bonus points if you write and perform your own song," he said.

Individual performers and bands have entered, he said, and although it is called a local competition, many of the participants are from out of town. Sanguinetti said, for instance, a band from South Dakota competed at Goodland's first competition last year and the winner was from Manhattan.

Colby's competition this year will welcome a participant from Cimarron, he said.

"We have a couple of bands who have entered," said Sanguinetti. "If a singer doesn't perform with a band, they sing along with a sound track, karaoke-style."

For the competition's first round, all of the participants will perform. Then, half are cut and the remaining four will perform a new song. The winner is chosen from those four, Sanguinetti said.

"The Showdown is the nation's largest country music talent competition," he said. "It's sure to be pretty entertaining. Most talent competitions are."

The deadline to enter was July 20, he said.

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