



Month-long renovation



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Renovation work began on the Pioneer Memorial Library Wednesday and these two men were taking out a section of the floor to make repairs. The library is also putting in new carpet, new tile and painting among other things. The library won't reopen until May 18.

County discusses health plans

By Christina Beringer
Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkansas.com

Thomas County department heads met with county commissioners Monday with concerns about the county's current insurance plans and made a request for some changes.

After the county found a savings of \$135,000, the current insurance policies were renewed in the summer of 2011 with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas covering major expenses and a health reimbursement account managed by professional insurance consultant Rhonda Fernandez for lower amounts.

The commissioners said their goal was to ensure more affordable deductibles for Thomas County employees. They chose a plan with a \$3,500 deductible, but the county covers \$3,000 of that so employees only actually pay a standard \$500 deductible.

The county pays 100 percent of the cost for a single employee, and the employee is responsible for child, spouse and family premiums.

Monday, County Clerk Shelly

Harms said that in reality, employees often end up paying the entire \$3,500 deductible out of pocket because of inconsistencies between companies that don't consider the same allowable charges.

Commissioners asked Harms to do some research on what other counties do and see how county employees feel about their current benefits. She said she received feedback from about 40 counties.

Ten county employees responded, saying they would like to add a child, spouse or family to their plan, at the county's expense.

They said not only would this help current employees, but it would lure potential applicants to the county as well.

"We also ask you to stay with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas, to discontinue the HRA services and reduce employee deductibles from \$3,500 to ... a \$500 deductible," Harms said on behalf of the employees.

"I talked with my employees at the sheriff's department, and they all would like a lower deductible and to consider adding a family plan, if possible," said Sheriff Rod

See "COUNTY," Page 2

College board hears report on expanded nursing program

By Kayla Cornett
Colby Free Press
kcornett@nwkansas.com

Colby Community College trustees heard about the growth of the nursing program Monday at their monthly meeting.

Ruth Wolfram, the director of nursing education, said the department had made great progress in expanding the program, with renovation at the Norton campus coming right along with the help of the Economic Development Corp., the Norton County Hospital and the Dane G. Hansen Foundation.

She said the old clinic building is being renovated for classroom and office space. It will include two interactive television rooms, a classroom, a lab and a computer lab.

"We're very thankful for that," Wolfram said, "and thanks for your support and help with that."

She said the WaKeeney campus is also using an old clinic that will accommodate the nursing program well and might hold another program, such as massage therapy, in the future.

She said she agrees with College President Dr. Stephen Vacik about making Norton and WaKeeney "real" sites for the college by offering general education classes and any other programs they can and by having a real presence in those communities.

Wolfram said they have been working with the Trego County Hospital, the Trego County-Lemke Memorial Hospital and the Economic Development Corp. in WaKeeney to develop the nursing program there.

She said the college has instituted two new programs, a practical nursing program in the evenings for both Norton and WaKeeney and a registered nursing program at both sites through interactive television learning.

"This is a big adventure for us," Wolfram

said. "We're bringing in a lot of students, and we appreciate the fact that you realize that this is doubling the workload of our staff."

She said they will be bringing on new staff and will have an accreditation visit next year from the national and state nursing boards. Even though she is retiring, she said, she will be working part-time next year and wants to make sure the college has a great accreditation visit.

She then said the department has completed the application process and new classes have been selected for next year. Wolfram said she will be traveling to all the sites in May and will be getting students going for next year.

"We anticipate full enrollment at those campuses, Goodland included," she said.

Wolfram said she didn't mention Goodland earlier because the college expanded there last

See "COLLEGE," Page 2

Parks launch new reserving system

TOPEKA (AP) – Kansas has launched a new system for reserving cabins and camp sites at state parks, fishing lakes and wildlife areas.

The state Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism says its online reservation service – www.ksoutdoors.com – makes it easier to find available cabins and camp sites.

The agency temporarily stopped taking reservations on-

line or by phone at the start of the month to get its new system up and running. A San Diego-based company, Active Network, is working with the agency to provide the system.

Wildlife and Parks officials say only about half of all camp sites and cabins will be available for online reservations. The rest will be set aside for visitors to claim on the spot.

Celebrity dinner set at Legion next week

By Christina Beringer
Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkansas.com

Plans are cooking for the Colby's second annual Celebrity Waiter Dinner.

Proceeds from the benefit will be split to help the Colby High School band purchase new uniforms and support the Colby High FFA as they redo the park on Copeland Avenue.

The dinner will take place from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday at the Colby American Legion Hall, 1840 W. Fourth St. For \$10 a plate, guests will enjoy a lasagna dinner, served with salad, garlic toast and dessert.

Make reservations by Monday by calling the Colby Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at (785) 460-3401.

Event coordinator Ashley Moser said the dinner is a fun event where the waiter teams get to compete with one another to raise the most tips. The winners get a prize, she said.

"When people call in to reserve their seat, they have to choose

which celebrity team they want to support," said Moser. "The team that raises the most money will get four Kansas City Royals tickets plus hotel and two four-day passes to the Country Stampede."

"We encourage the waiters to make it as fun as they want to make the most tips."

She said that in addition to the celebrity waiters, student waiters will help to make sure all of the guests are taken care of.

The dinner is a come-and-go event, however people will need to decide which waiter they want, since the teams will serve during designated times. The first group will serve from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and the second from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Celebrity waiters in the first group are Travis and Jessica Vaughn, Pat and Deanna Mallory, Ed and Pam Geihlsler, Tom and Nancy Rundel and James and Trisha Carney.

The second group includes Sacha Sanguinetti and Chad Jones, Bob and Susan McLemore, Joey and Jill Nickols, Reagan and Katie Coulter and Paul and Jenny Niblock.

The event is co-sponsored by the Farmers and Merchants Bank of Colby and Rocking M Radio.



Celebrity Waiter Luke Tubbs hustled to serve customers at last year's Celebrity Waiter Event, held at the Colby United Methodist

Church. He and his wife Jada ended up earning the most tips.

ASHLEY MOSER/Farmers and Merchants Bank

