



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Norton man is new principal

By Steve Haynes

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Jeff Wallingford says he's excited to be the new principal of Colby High School and looking forward to working with the administrators and staff at the school and becoming part of the community.

Wallingford, 52, currently principal of the Norton Junior High School, was hired by the Colby School Board last Monday on the recommendation of Superintendent

Terril Harrison and the district's selection committee.

The district began the search in February after deciding that the current setup, under which administrators were covering their own jobs and parts of the principal's duties, wasn't the best. Applications were screened at the end of March, and four finalists were invited to interview the week of April 8. Three actually came to Colby, where a five-member committee spent about half a day with each.

Mr. Wallingford and his wife, Deena,

were recommended to the Colby School Board and approved for hiring at the monthly meeting last week.

The new principal said he grew up in Bartlesville, Okla., north of Tulsa, where his father was a radiologist. He graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond with a degree in health and physical education, recreation and dance. Later, he earned a master's degree in exercise science and higher education from Northeastern State University at Tahlequah, Okla.

Wallingford said he got an endorsement

in educational leadership from Pittsburg State University while working in southeast Kansas.

He said he began his career teaching in the Savannah, Ga., area. After getting his masters, he was director of student activities at Allen County Community College in Iola. Later, he got a job in Gainesville, Ga., north of Atlanta. He was assistant principal, director of the sixth-grade academy and director of the alternative school at Lumpkin

See "NORTON," Page 2



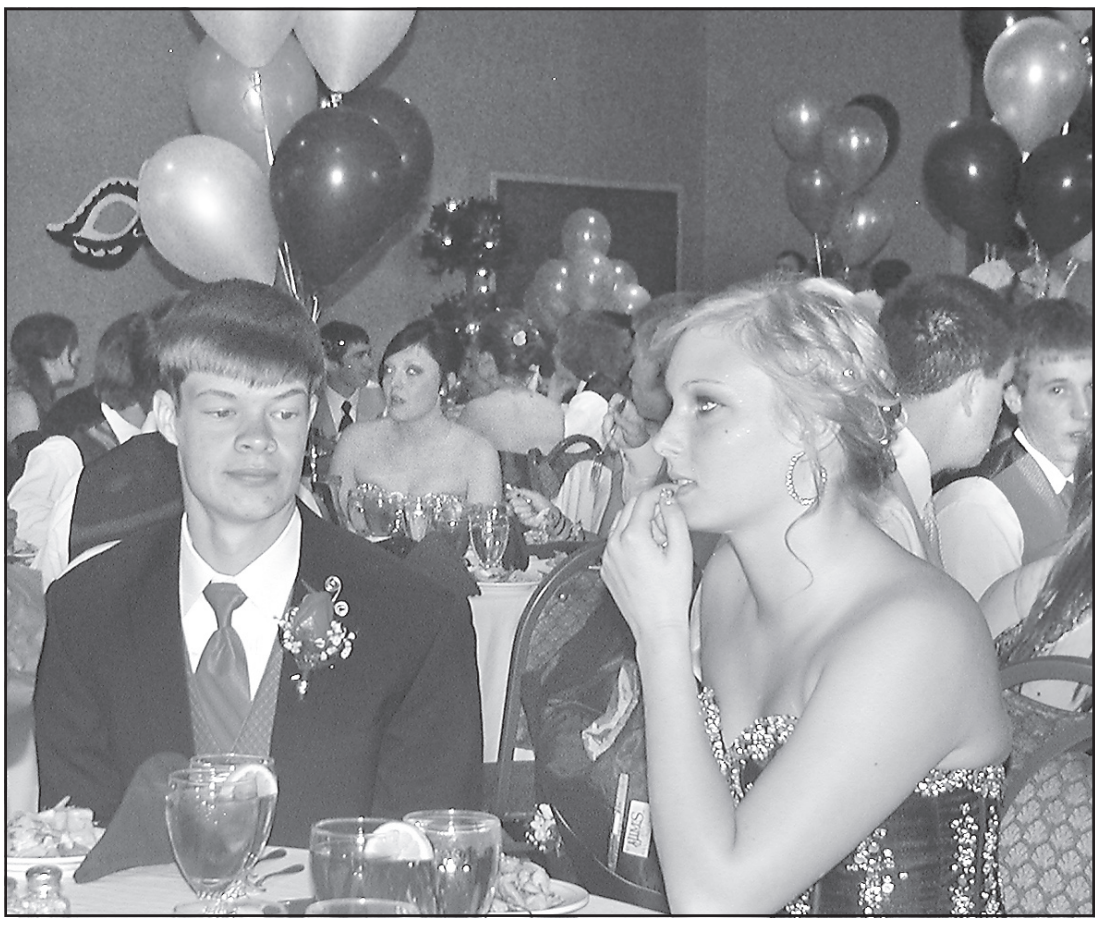
Jeff Wallingford, new principal.



Students shine on big night

Emilea Finley (above) was escorted by John Faber at the Colby High School promenade. It started at 6 p.m. Saturday, just prior to this year's prom at the City Limits Convention Center. The theme for the evening was Masquerade Night. Alyse Dumler and her date, Dylan Moss, (right) talked at their table while waiting for their chance to have a prom picture taken. Dinner started at 7 p.m., with the dance to start at 8:30 p.m.

KATHRYN BALLARD
Colby Free Press



Escapee finds freedom brief, arrest shocking

By Steve Haynes

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A prisoner won a few minutes of freedom from the Thomas County Jail on Saturday at the cost of a few scrapes and scratches — and a shock from a Tazer.

That, and he'll face a new round of charges including felony escape, resisting arrest and damaging county property.

Sheriff Rod Taylor said the man, Jeff Anthony Benedetti, 35, from Colorado, was in the fenced yard behind the jail Saturday. The sheriff said there had been a shift change, and when one of the jailers looked up at the yard monitor, he noticed the man was gone.

He said Benedetti apparently had found a place where a wire in the chain-link fence was loose and simply unraveled the bottom part of the fence, creating a hole. When deputies ran outside, the sheriff said, they saw the prisoner running off to the east.

He wasn't gone long.

The alarm went out at 4:23 p.m., Taylor said, and at 4:31 officers reported the man was in custody. He said a city police officer spotted the escapee north of Pine

Street along the railroad tracks behind Beulah Cemetery.

"He had about 10 minutes of freedom," the sheriff said. "He followed this creek bottom over by the railroad tracks. They got him over by Pine, where the railroad crosses the street.

"They yelled at him to give up, but he wouldn't. They ended up tazing him."

The sheriff said officers told the escapee to get down on the ground, but he took a fighting stance. When they found him Taylor added, he was walking south in his briefs, barefoot, having shed his orange-and-white jail shirt and pants and orange flip-flops along the way.

"He had some scratches where he'd gone though the wire," the sheriff said.

He said Benedetti had been in the jail about three months, awaiting trial on drug charges and a count of assault against a police officer.

"He's kind of a troublemaker," the sheriff said, adding that Benedetti could expect to see new charges of escape, resisting arrest and destruction of county property

See "ESCAPEE," Page 2

Med school chief leaves KU quietly

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — A leader of the University of Kansas Medical Center will be placed on administrative leave and is no longer involved in any university-related decisions under a severance agreement that will pay her more than \$419,000 after she officially steps down in June.

University of Kansas officials announced the agreement Tuesday with Barbara Atkinson, executive

vice chancellor of the Medical Center and executive dean of the University of Kansas School of Medicine, *The Lawrence Journal-World* reported (bit.ly/Iba5EU).

Although she will be placed on administrative leave and has not been involved in university decisions since April 9, she will be paid her normal salary through June

See "MED," Page 2

Free hotdogs promote safe digging line

By Christina Beringer

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Employees and pipeline workers will be grilling up free hotdogs Thursday to promote 811 Safe Digging Month during April.

Sponsored by the Southern Star Central Gas Pipeline's Colby District, the feed will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Colby Implement, 405 W. Horton.

"Not only will we be promoting safety, which is our No. 1 concern," said Jared Hamilton, Southern Star operations team lead, "but it is also an appreciation event for our most valued stakeholders, our farmers and landowners."

Safety and operations equipment will be on display, said Hamilton, and information about safe digging will be available.

Hamilton said the first thing everyone should do when planning

to dig, no matter how big or small the project, is to call 811 from any phone two to three days in advance. Professionals will come out to locate and mark any underground pipes and cables.

"The free phone call is the first step to prevent utility damage, and it's an important one," says the website Call 811. "Calling 811 before digging reduces the likelihood of an incident to less than 1 percent."

The website goes on to list five steps to safer digging: make a free call to 811 a few days before digging; wait the required time; locate accurately; respect the marks; and dig with care.

"The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple lines in a common area," said the website. "Digging without calling can disrupt service in an entire neigh-

See "FREE," Page 2

Legislators return to face set of thorny problems

TOPEKA (AP) — Legislators have returned to the Kansas Statehouse to resume their work on remaining issues of the 2012 session.

Today is the 74th day out of the 90-day regular session authorized by the state Consti-

tution. Legislators gavelled back into session shortly after 10 a.m. to handle routine announcements.

Many major issues facing legislators in January remain unfinished, including proposals to change the state's pension, tax and education systems. Legislators must finish work on a \$14 billion state budget for the fiscal year begin-

ning July 1.

Another issue commanding attention is work on redrawing the state's 40 Senate, 125 House and four U.S. House districts to reflect changes from the 2010 census. Legislators must complete the work by Thursday, May 10, to avoid a delay in the August primary election.

Job training service moves to county office

By Christina Beringer

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Colby's Kansas WorkforceONE office, which helps people prepare themselves for a better job, had to move due to the closing of the KansasWorks Center, the state job service office, earlier this month.

"The closure at 1135 S. Country Club Dr. was a decision of the Kansas Department of Commerce, not Kansas WorkforceONE," said program director Deb Scheibler in Salina. "Our board continues their dedication to provide services throughout our 62-county service area."

The new office is in the Thomas County Office Complex, at 350 S. Range, Suite 5, she said. Hours are 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Employment specialist Patti Purvis can be reached at (620) 200-0708.

The office helps people obtain credentials and work experience so they can get a job, Scheibler said. It made the move after the job office closed April 4.

All services are free, she said. Clients must be 18 or older, and due to limited budget, they must fall into one or more of the agency's priority categories: low income, underemployed, receiving food stamps and or facing multiple hiring barriers.

