



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

County chairman won't run for re-election

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkansas.com

It's an election year for most county officials, but you won't see Ken Christiansen's name on the ballot this go-around. Christiansen, chairman of the Thomas County Commission, said Wednesday this will be his last term.

He said he had gone back and forth about the decision over the past couple of weeks, especially after he told his fellow commissioners last week and they urged him to stay on.

"It was a difficult decision to make, and I don't want to leave these guys (Commissioners Paul Steele and Byron Sowers), but the county will be in good hands," Christiansen said. "They are very capable of handling things, and Thomas County has many good department heads and dedicated employees."

After 7 1/2 years on the commission, Christiansen said, he will round out his second four-year term on Jan. 14.

"You know when something just feels right," he added, "and the timing won't get any better since I'm near the end of my second term."

Christiansen said he joined the board alongside Commissioner Steele. He was chosen among his peers to take on the chair from former Chairman Ron Evans at the time Byron Sowers joined in 2006.

He said the hardest part was revealing his decision to his fellow commissioners. His compatriots both praised Christiansen's contributions.

"I'm sad about him leaving the board," said Sowers, "but I understand his reasoning and appreciate everything he's done for the county."

Christiansen said there are two major things that stand out in his mind of the

many that his is proud to have been a part of as commission chairman.

"The first was being able to help change the health department around," he said, "and the second is bringing Joe Hickert on board at Emergency Medical Services."

He and Steele said that before they hired Director Kasiah Rothchild about five years ago, the Health Department was about \$65,000 "in the red." Now, they are over \$100,000 "in the black," he said.

"He personally recruited Kasiah and it's been a great decision," said Steele. "He is very good at people skills, and his

personnel action has been impressive. That's one of the many things we'll miss about him."

"I've enjoyed these eight years," Christiansen said, "but I'm going to devote more time to my farming operation."

Regrets?
"I wanted to be on the board when the Solomon Forks Wind Farm gets going," the commissioner said. "It doesn't look like that's going to be in the near future. They don't have a real good idea when they will get going."

"Maybe it will in the future. I hope it does."

Bank makes \$10,000 gift to hospital here

Sunflower Bank of Colby has pledged a five-year, \$10,000 commitment to the Health Care Expansion Project at Citizens Medical Center.

The hospital is in the midst of a \$1.9 million, three-year campaign to incorporate new services and more space into its facilities to accommodate a growing staff of health-care providers.

"It has been a pleasure to work with Sunflower Bank over the years," said Tama Unger director of fund development and community relations for the center. "Now, as we undertake an expansion that will change the face of health care in Colby, Sunflower Bank has again stepped up to help. Their community and financial support is greatly appreciated."

"We are extremely proud to be able to support the growth of Citizens Medical Center," said bank President Jim Stanley. "This hos-

pital provides a valuable service to this region that goes beyond the traffic that comes through its doors each day. It provides those who are proud to have roots in this region and to build their future here the peace of mind that quality health care will be available."

He said the bank's commitment to this region goes beyond its hundred-year commitment to Kansas.

"Through the bank's leadership in the community, including our Community Ambassadors program and our ABC's of Being True to our School program," Stanley said, "we engage each new generation to see the future they can create for themselves and their community."

Sunflower is a \$1.7 billion family-owned community bank headquartered in Salina with 19 other locations in Kansas, Colorado and Missouri.

City authorizes grant application

By Kayla Cornett

Colby Free Press
kcornett@nwkansas.com

The Colby City Council authorized the Safe Routes to School program last Tuesday to apply for a \$250,000 grant to engineer walking and biking routes to the Colby Grade and Middle schools.

Program Director Megan Carmichael told the council Safe Routes is geared toward getting students to walk or ride their bikes to school more.

She said most of the grant money will be used for engineering, which includes buying new signs and restriping some streets.

"This year, we've kind of just started to focus on data collection and how many kids do ride and walk to school," Carmichael said, "... and then next year, if

we're able to get the grant, we'll go more towards the engineering and obviously continue with the encouragement and education events."

Sue Evans, executive director of the Northwest Kansas Council on Substance Abuse, said the proposed budget she and Carmichael gave to the council is what they will turn in with the grant application.

She said the city is actually the applicant because this work will be done through the city in conjunction with the Kansas Department of Transportation.

Evans also gave the council maps, which were viewed by someone from Penco Engineering, showing the group's proposed routes. She said they had talked

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President Truman's debt finally paid after 55 years

By Brian Burnes

The Kansas City Star

OVERLAND PARK (AP) — Harry Truman paid off his last debt Wednesday.

The former president — actually, longtime Truman impersonator Niel Johnson — handed \$56.63 to Truman's former paperboy, who said he never was paid for about six months worth of newspapers delivered to Truman's Indepen-

dence home in 1947.

"Honesty was one of my policies," Johnson told George Lund.

The account was settled, with interest, before a large crowd at the Tallgrass Creek retirement community in Overland Park, where Lund, 80, now lives.

Before the ceremony, Lund said he wasn't sure he wanted the debt to be paid. It had always made for such a great story.

"And I thought that if I ever got paid, I wouldn't be able to tell the story again," said Lund, a retired architect.

The story surfaced a year ago. After attending a Truman continuing education program at his retirement community, Lund mentioned that Truman still owed him from his newspaper route. In 1947 Lund, then 15, delivered *The Independence Examiner* to Truman's door for about six months.

Lund then handed off the route to a successor, saying if Truman ever made good on the approximately \$7.50 owed, he wanted it.

But he never got it.

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Colby Middle School holds spring concert

Rebecca Farrow (above) had one of the solos during the Colby Middle School spring vocal concert Monday evening at the grade-school auditorium, as did Madisyn Haggard (right). Teacher Jill Nickols directed the choir.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press



Five riders injured in accident

Five riders in the annual Run for the Wall were hurt Sunday after someone ahead of them hit the brakes near a construction zone on Interstate 70 west of the Brewster exit and six riders on four bikes wound up on the pavement.

The 300-plus bikers on the Memorial Day ride had just left Goodland, where they spent the night, headed for the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington. The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that one of the bikers hit the brakes and four riders behind him couldn't slow down in time. Bikes and riders ended up spilling across both eastbound lanes.

"The four vehicles could not slow in time and lost control, creating a chain reaction," a trooper reported. The accident occurred about 9:45 a.m.

The freeway is down to two lanes due to construction at the county line. Eastbound drivers have to merge into one lane and shift over to the

north pavement.

The patrol identified the victims as:

- Dale Queenan, 52, riding a 2012 Harley-Davidson, and his passenger, Marcia Bourke, 48, both of Maryland, New South Wales, Australia. They were taken to the Goodland Regional Medical Center, then flown to St. Anthony Central Hospital in Denver.

- Michael Kenyon, 67, Mesa, Ariz., on a 2006 Kawasaki, taken to the Goodland hospital.

- Larry Kosnik, 65, LaPorte, Ind., riding a 2001 Harley, taken to Citizens Medical Center in Colby for a checkup. He was wearing a helmet. His passenger, Karen Williams, 68, Sun Lakes, Ariz., also was taken to Colby. Williams later was flown to Swedish Medical Center in Denver. The driver of the fourth bike in the spill, Michael Robertson, 63, Inyokern, Calif., on a 2006 Harley, was not injured.



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