



Senator discusses key issues

By Marian Ballard
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State Sen. Allen Schmidt paid a visit to Colby Tuesday, stopping at Smoffee's to meet voters after attending the regular weekly meeting of the Colby Rotary Club.

Schmidt, a Democrat who lives on a farm north of Hays, has served as Senator of the 36th District for two years. He became a candidate for the 40th District when the court's redistricting moved Ellis County and the western part of Phillips County into this district.

He said he identifies health care as one of the key issues in Kansas at present. Skeptical of the privatization under KanCare, which is supposed to lower overall medical costs, he said the new system is "supposedly more efficient" and is designed to offer synchronized rather than overlapping services.

Schmidt's background in military medical services — he retired in 2009 from his final position as deputy commander for readiness of the Army Reserve Medical Command — gives him specialized knowledge in the area, and he compared the current efforts in Kansas to trends in the army, focusing on preventive care and assigning case managers to oversee certain types of illnesses. He said the key to lower medical costs is reducing hospital and emergency room visits and helping senior citizens stay independent as long as possible.

On another issue, Schmidt said education in northwest Kansas will take a strong advocate due to the population loss in rural areas. Shrinking schools facing high fixed costs in buildings and transportation, for example, need sup-

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State Sen. Allen Schmidt (right) of Hays spoke with Ken Poland, a farmer and guest columnist for the Colby Free Press, about several issues Tuesday at Smoffee's. Schmidt attended a Colby Rotary Club meeting during his visit before spending a couple of hours at Smoffee's for a "meet and greet" session.

MARIAN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

City Council hears request to add stop signs

By Sam Dieter
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New City Manager Tyson McGreer weighed in on several funding issues at his first city council meeting Tuesday night.

The meeting started with a request by residents Sandy and Dennis Diedrich to place stop signs along Garfield Avenue.

"I would like to see some of those intersections just with stop signs," she said.

Diedrich explained that since moving there in 1972, she has seen several bad wrecks along the street and was in one herself at Garfield and Second Street years ago.

"I just about got hit here on my way over," her husband Dennis said.

Council members asked Police Chief Randy Jones about the area, and he said

there have been eight accidents along Garfield in the past three years.

"People just don't drive as cautiously, in my opinion, as they should when there's unmarked intersections," Jones said.

Still, he added that the number of wrecks in that area is not excessive, and he has no recommendations for where the stop signs are put.

Council members discussed the legality of a fence on Second and Garfield and

whether it could block a driver's view of the road. They also discussed where to place stop signs along the road, since there are already yield signs at several intersections.

If people are expecting a stop sign and do not yield at the right time, Jones said, "the accidents aren't going to be at 15 mph, it's going to be at 30-plus."

Building inspector Rick Dickman suggested mapping out the area to study the

traffic and find what speeds people are going, and the discussion was tabled pending further study.

The next order of business was a request from Rebel Jay, an art instructor at Colby Community College, to have Franklin Avenue closed between Fourth and Fifth streets from 2 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 27, for the Art Walk, which will include a

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Hospital takes on Colby building

By Sam Dieter
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The Logan County Hospital in Oakley is leasing a building held by the former Colby Medical and Surgical Center, running a clinic there under a new name.

Colby Medical Services is the name of the clinic now operating out of the building at 175 South Range.

Although technically a different business, it has the same location, equipment, business hours and most of the same employees, hospital Administrator Darcy Howard said.

"To the patient, they're probably not going to see that big a change," Howard said.

Starting Sept. 1, the hospital began leasing the building and equipment from Brenda Hildyard, wife of the late physician Victor Hildyard, she said. A Sept. 18 letter explained the name change to patients and stated that new ac-

counts would be set up for patients after they paid their bill to the old clinic.

"The Logan County Hospital has leased that building and we're operating a clinic there," Howard said, adding, "we're just leasing the building, we did not buy the practice."

She said the purpose of the move was for the hospital to maintain services to patients of the old clinic.

"We had been working with that clinic in the past," Howard said. "A lot of the patients that go there have been patients that go to Logan County Hospital."

Colby Medical Services is licensed as an independent physician clinic, Howard said. The possibility of the clinic obtaining a license as a rural health clinic is being explored, but she did not know when this change would come.

The letter said the clinic is looking for a new full-time physician along with two other doctors.

Saving fuel in a clever way



DARRELL PABST

David Pabst had the perfect answer to the high cost of fuel when he got out the team and harness to rake together feed rows of cane Tuesday on his farm 4 1/2 miles north of Colby. His driving rig has been adapted from tractor-drawn equip-

ment, though he does have some older horse-drawn equipment he also uses. He's had two of the horses for seven years and got the other two this spring.

State court upholds limits on damages

By John Hanna
The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Kansas can continue to limit pain and suffering compensation awards in personal injury lawsuits to \$250,000, the state Supreme Court ruled today, upholding a lower court decision that slashed damages offered to a woman whose doctor removed the wrong ovary

from her in 2002. Eudora resident Amy Miller appealed a Douglas County district judge's decision to cut the nearly \$760,000 in damages she received in a medical malpractice lawsuit in 2006, an award that included \$575,000 for non-economic losses.

Business and medical groups See "COURT," Page 2

Candidate's plan raises cost questions

By Ricardo Alonzo-Zaldivar
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Mitt Romney's Medicare plan won't try to control costs by limiting the payments that future retirees would use to buy private health insurance, aides say, adding detail to a proposal from the Republican presidential nominee that has both intrigued and confused many Americans.

Reining in costs is vital to keeping Medicare affordable, and in

their plans, both President Barack Obama and Romney's running mate, Paul Ryan, set limits on the growth of future spending.

Independent experts say they doubt that Romney's Medicare plan can succeed without some kind of hard spending limit; Romney campaign officials say the savings will come through competition among health insurance plans.

"It sounds like Romney is trying to have it both ways," said Robert Bixby, executive director of the

Concord Coalition, a nonpartisan group advocating to reduce government deficits. "It's a really important point whether there will be a cap. It will help determine whether the health care savings he's touting are credible."

For example, a President Romney would not be able to get credit for assumed savings through competition under the procedures currently used to analyze legislation by the all-important Congressional Budget Office. The nonpartisan budget referees might rule

such a plan out of bounds, forcing Romney to accept a cap.

Bixby was a member of a Bipartisan Policy Center group that last year produced a deficit reduction plan that, like Romney's, called for shifting Medicare from an open-ended benefit to a program that gives future retirees a fixed amount of money for health insurance. It included a cap on the growth of spending.

