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COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Thursday

October 18, 2012
Volume 123, Number 163
Serving Thomas County since 1888

Campaign signs stolen from yards

By Sam Dieter
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Several election signs have gone missing in what one campaign manager says was a theft. “In a small town like Colby, you don’t need that ... going on,” said Florence Rodriguez. Florence Rodriguez acts as chairperson for her son David Rodriguez, the Democrat who is challenging Republican incumbent Rod Taylor for the sheriff’s seat in this year’s election. She said that seven of her son’s signs were stolen at about 10 p.m. last night. “He actually had somebody call him and ask him if he was pulling out of the sheriff’s race,” she said. A friend of Dave Rodriguez

had seen two girls get out of what looked like a blue Jeep Liberty and take two of his signs near the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Pine Street. He did not have any further description of the suspects. Florence Rodriguez thought her son’s friend would want to stay anonymous. Her son told her he filed a police report, but had not heard any more information about the case. Several weeks ago, she said, three other signs had been stepped on and broken. “You know, it’s not cool to continue to do something like this, it’s ridiculous,” she said, especially because “those darn things cost him.” Florence Rodriguez estimates that her son paid a total of \$1,300 for 100 campaign signs.

Quite the haul



Colby Girl Scouts Caitlin Cline (left), Randi Cloe and Maura Hansen from Ambassador Troop 10218 were a part of the annual Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat on Sunday. The Girl Scouts along with the Catholic Youth Group, Colby Community Colleges Presidential Scholars and women and men’s

basketball, women and men’s cross country/track and wrestling teams went door-to-door to collect food for the Genesis-Thomas County food bank. The groups succeeded in collecting 2,700 pounds of food.

PENNY CLINE/Colby Girl Scouts

College to discontinue Thomas County tuition grants

By Kayla Cornett
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The Colby Community College trustees held their monthly meeting at the Norton nursing facility Monday, taking a tour of the facility before getting down to business, but made a big decision that night. The college will discontinue the Thomas County Tuition Grant starting next fall. Dr. Stephen Vacik, college president, said the college had more than \$1 million

being given out through scholarships, so he had groups make some cuts to try and get that figure down to a target number of \$850,000. “The only way we can do that without drastically cutting all those other ones,” he said, “is by doing away with the Thomas County tuition guarantee. I think it’s something we need to do.” However, Vacik proposed that the college grandfather in the freshman class of this academic year, meaning those students who received the grant this year would still receive it next year. But, he

said, beginning next fall, Colby would discontinue the program. “I think it’s expensive,” Vacik said, “and I think personally, we cannot continue to sustain as we’ve been.” Vacik said he knows there will be disgruntled people, but he doesn’t think they will lose students. Vice Chair Cindy Black said she thinks it’s bad business if they keep it at this point. “We’ve been struggling with it for years,” she said. “I started talking about it in 2005 when I came on the board ...

because I just didn’t see that we could sustain it.” Trustee Dale Herschberger said he thinks the concept of why the grant was started has vanished, and said things like that happen all the time. Vacik said they tried to modify the program last year, but even with that number, they were still looking at about \$200,000. He said Colby’s scholarship program is very generous and the college has been fortunate. “The (college) foundation has given us monies to help us,” he said. “The Han-

sen Foundation has given us money to help us. Along with institutional monies that we’re putting towards this, we have a pretty vibrant, robust scholarship program. In fact, I would say one of the bigger ones without this (grant).” He said dropping this program will help the college to start reconciling some of the money issues its been having, even though there are still some cash flow problems. Herschberger added that the families

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Modular jail cells shown off in county office complex lot

People from around the county stopped at the parking lot of the Thomas County Office Complex Monday to see a modular cell demo by Maximum Security Systems, an option being considered for the Thomas County jail project.

Jay Seavy of the maximum security company led Thomas County commissioners Ken Christiansen and Paul Steele, Brewster Mayor Mike Baughn, Colby Mayor Gary Adrian and other interested citizens on a tour of the mock jail cell.

Steele said that if the county decides to approve this option to expand or construct a new jail and law enforcement facility, the county would need to contract 16 prison cells and two holding cells. Construction of the interlocking units would only take a day, said Seavy.

The complete unit, Seavy said, costs about \$14,500 to \$16,500 and includes two built-in bunks, a desk, shower and commode, lights, electronic locks and plumbing. It measures the minimum square footage allowed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and is continually welded to ensure there are no seams.



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

County commissioner Ken Christiansen (left) and Brewster Mayor Mike Baughn inspected a jail cell Oct. 15 at the Thomas County Office Complex. Maximum Security Systems set up models of the mock jail cells as a possible answer to the need for a new jail for Thomas County.

“This is to make sure the prisoner can’t hide things in any open seam, like a weapon,” said Seavy. The cell comes with other features that may be added, including a security camera the size of a pencil’s eraser. These, Sevey said, are especially beneficial for hold-

ing cells and suicide prevention cells. Plumbing for the units is housed outside of the cells, behind the rear wall, and can be accessed as a nonsecure place for plumbing and maintenance needs.

County commissioners release Salina company from Mingo road contract

By Christina Beringer
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Thomas County Commissioners gave approval Monday to release Ballou Pavement Solutions of Salina from their agreement with the county, after completing improvements on a five-mile stretch of Mingo Road last fall. Road and Bridge Supervisor Clair Schrock said after the meeting the road was laid with hot mix about 16 or 17 years ago and has lasted a long time with minimal

maintenance. However, the cracks were getting wide enough that they could no longer be sealed up. Ballou used an “in-place recycle” method to fix the road, said Schrock, where they ground up about three inches of the road, mixed it with oil and replaced it. “They were here about three weeks ago to make some additional improvements we’d asked them to do,” said Schrock. “We had an agreement they’d keep a watch on the road from the summer to October. Now, they want released.” Schrock said that the calibrations on

their machine weren’t working correctly at first, and as a result, the initial three miles of work that was done on one side of the road has been rough. Although they wouldn’t specify what was wrong, Schrock said he thinks it wasn’t letting out the right amount of oil. “Not all of it has broken down,” he said. “But we’ve had problems with it since day one,” added Commission Chairman Ken Christiansen, saying he and other commissioners have been getting complaints from people who use the road.

Schrock said he was given a seven-year estimate of how long the road should last, but guesses his department will need to start fixing it again in three years. “We’ll have to grind off the high spots,” he explained, “and overlay it with cold mix sooner than we thought. We’ve had good luck with the cold mix.” Commissioner Paul Steele added that some of their problems may have been caused by the aggregate they mixed into their hot-mix solution – the three-inch layer that came from the road – since it probably didn’t have the right shape of

rocks and smaller dirt particles that are conducive to long-lasting roads. Schrock said the five-mile project cost the county about \$47,000 per mile, adding it’s not as expensive as the landfill road was, which cost the county about \$75,000 for about 3/4 of a mile. He said the difference in cost is because

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Ready for flu season



DEBBIE SCHWANKE/Colby Community College

Colby Community College student nurse Patty Loing, Denver, gave a flu shot to Student Support Services Counselor Lisa Stithem at a vaccine clinic held Wednesday in the Student Union. Vaccines were given to students, faculty and staff members.

Kiwanis plans pancake feed Saturday

By Christina Beringer
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Kiwanis of Colby is enticing people to help local kids in need of holiday cheer this Christmas by serving up all-you-can-eat pancakes on Saturday. The annual Kiwanis Pancake Feed will be from 7

a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 220 N. Lake in Colby. Pancake lovers can indulge in an endless stack of made-from-scratch hot cakes, said Kiwanis member Kenton Krehbiel, which are cooked up using a long-time family recipe.

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