



County officials canvass 3,502 ballots

By Christina Beringer
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Votes from the Nov. 6 general election were canvassed Thursday morning at the Thomas County courthouse by Commissioners Ken Christiansen and Paul Steele, County Clerk Shelly Harms, Deputy Clerk Susan Guill and Treasurer Donita Applebury.

Harms said 4,854 voters registered in the county by the Tuesday, Oct. 16, deadline. Of those, 3,502 people cast ballots. "About 72 percent of Thomas County voters cast ballots this year," said Harms, "and 32 percent of those were early voters who returned their ballots by noon on Monday, Nov. 5. This is the best turnout we've had since I became clerk in 2004. "Although, we'll be lucky if we get 17 percent to vote next year for the school

elections." "We had a wonderful turnout," agreed Christiansen. The county had 131 provisional ballots – ballots with questions relating to the voter's eligibility. Of those, 86 were accepted. The remaining ballots were denied because they were new registrants from outside the county who did not meet the Oct. 16 deadline to register or for various other reasons. Five ballots were not

counted because the voters did not provide photo identification. Harms said the doors to the Community Building opened at 7 a.m., and over 500 people got through the process and out the door in the first 33 minutes. Some interesting write-ins included ZZ, Jesus, Chuck Norris, Bart Simpson, and someone voted for Presidential Candidate Willie Nelson and Vice President Snoop Dog.

Another write-in was Vincent Glad, who received eight votes for Morgan Township Treasurer. However, he is not qualified since he lives within the Colby city limits. John Cranston received two votes for the same position. He'll be contacted and will be given the option to accept or reject the position, Harms said. If he rejects

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Old hospital nominated as historic site

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The long-vacant St. Thomas Hospital on Range Avenue has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places, which could help it move towards renovation. The Kansas Historical Society placed the hospital on its register of historic places on Nov. 3. Sarah Martin, National Register coordinator for the society, said she filed the paperwork earlier this week with the U.S. Department of the Interior, which will probably take 45 to 60 days to come back with a response. The process to place the build-

ing on the national register was started by Cohen Esery, a real estate company based in Overland Park which is buying the building from Brenda Hildyard of Colby to renovate as apartment housing. The firm says it plans 30 affordable housing units in the project, which will cost roughly \$7 million. Tim Quigley, a development partner with the company, said it needs a low-income tax credit and a historical tax credit before working on the building. "We are in the process of having the project approved for historic credits," Quigley said, adding that his company hopes to start work

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Fire damages farm outbuilding

The Colby Fire Department responded Wednesday afternoon to a fire about four miles south of Halford. The department's records say that a call came in at 4:30 p.m. about a fire on an old farmstead at 3050 County Road M. Fire Chief Bob McLemore said that an old outbuilding with no utilities attached to it which was being used for storage caught fire.

The department paged four volunteers, got to the scene at 5 p.m. and spent another hour fighting the fire. They were done cleaning up hot spots at 6:45 p.m. The cause was still undetermined, McLemore said, and the building did not completely burn. A number for the owner of the farmstead, Roy Murphy, had been disconnected.

K-State researchers help map genome

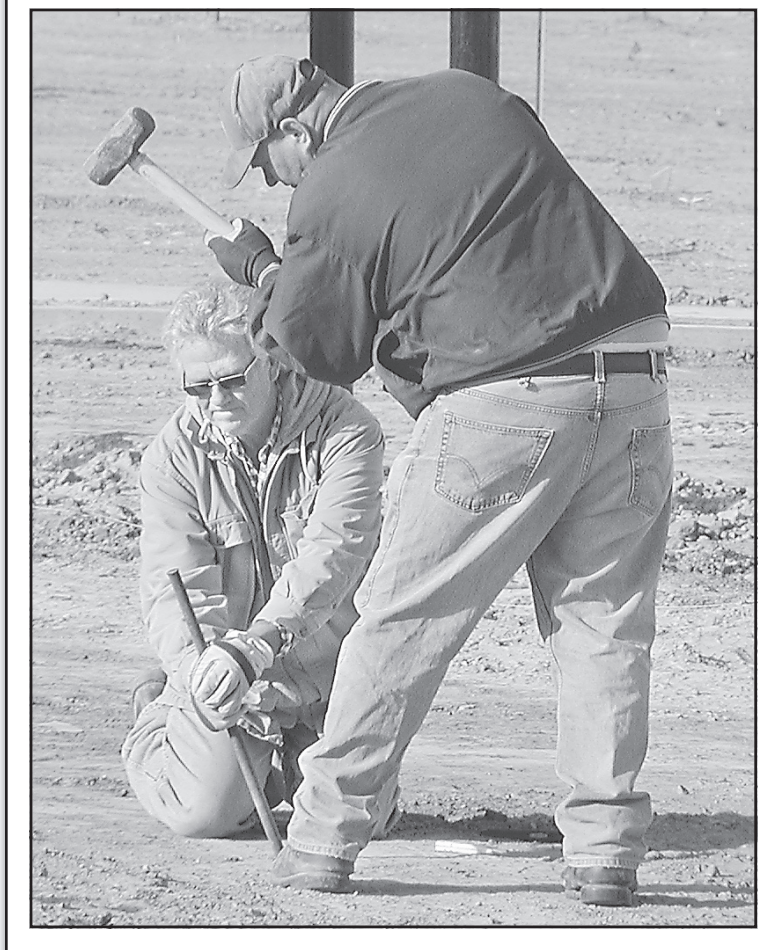
MANHATTAN (AP) – Two Kansas State University researchers were part of a successful international effort to map the complete genome of the domestic pig. The university says in a news release that knowing the complete list of DNA and genes for domestic pigs could eventually help improve the pigs' health. It also

could provide insight into human health, because pigs and humans share similar physiologies. The Kansas State researchers involved were Yongming Sang, a research assistant professor of anatomy and physiology, and Frank Blecha, associate dean for the College of Veterinary Medicine.



A group of volunteers (above) spent most of the week building a playground near the walking trail north of the Aquatic Park. They had finished several structures by Friday morning. There have been about 20 city employees and members of local businesses working on the playground (below), most of which should be completed by early December.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press



Volunteers assemble playground at pool

By Sam Dieter
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Motorists on Franklin Avenue have probably noticed a new addition to the landscape near the Colby Aquatic Park: a playground. Since Tuesday, a group of about 20 volunteers has been assembling the playground near the recently built walking trail just north of the pool. By this morning, the frame for a set of swings and two small structures had been completed, along with the beginnings of a larger structure. Brent Wiedeman, president of F&M Bank, organized the work team along with Mike Woofter, owner of Woofter Construction. "Probably the same time we were putting together the pool," Wiedeman said, "the group of community leaders had ideas that they wanted eventually a pool park." A total of \$55,000 was raised between 10 individuals and businesses, and the city lent

\$97,500 for the project. Labor for the project came from employees of Woofter, Wiedeman and the city and county, as well as volunteers. Woofter and the city lent construction equipment needed for the job. Wiedeman said that the playground will fill up most of the area between the parking lot for the Aquatic Park and the nearest stretch of the walking trail. "In the next few weeks, we'll be finishing up," he said. That will include a chain link fence around the playground, climbing rocks and between \$25,000 and \$30,000 worth of rubber mulch. The park will be public property, but there will be a bronze plaque with the names of the donors, Wiedeman said. The mulch might be added next spring, but the rest will be finished by the end of this month or start of December. Wiedeman said he thinks the whole project will cost just over \$200,000 and is he looking for another five to 10 organizations to donate \$2,500 or more.

Honoring senior veterans



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

American Legion members visited Colby nursing homes on Veteran's Day, giving residents who were in the armed forces plaques to recognize their service. They stopped to honor 10 veterans at the Desert Care Center.

Obama says people want action

By Andrew Taylor
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama urged the leaders of Washington's divided government today to join him in "tough compromises" to keep the economy from plummeting and taxes from rising for millions of Americans in the new year. "I think we're all aware that we have some urgent business to do," Obama said at the White House with the nation's top Republican, House Speaker John Boehner, at his side. Sitting to the president's other side was the Senate's leader, Democrat Harry Reid, as negotiations over the "fiscal cliff" began in earnest. Without a deal between Obama and Congress, a series of tax increases and spending cuts will kick in on Jan. 1, with potential to

throw the nation into recession. All sides have a deep political stake in coming to terms, but Obama and Republicans in Congress are at a stalemate on raising taxes on incomes over \$250,000. On his turf, Obama made the only statement before reporters were asked to leave the Roosevelt Room. Obama used the moment before the TV cameras to try to set a tone of compromise, right down to the body language. Obama ribbed Boehner about his birthday on Saturday, saying he would not embarrass the speaker with a cake because he was not sure how many candles would be needed. "Yeah, right," a smiling Boehner said as the two literally poked some fun at each other and then shook hands. Across the table sat the Senate's top Republican, Mitch Con-

nell, who has set a harsher tone toward Obama in the fallout of last week's election. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Vice President Joe Biden, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and a few top White House advisers also took part. Obama said the goal was to prevent a tax hike for middle-class families, create jobs and keep the economy growing. In news conferences and other public statements, Obama and the congressional leaders have been setting negotiating markers for a debt deal. The session at the White House was their first meeting together since the election, one in which Obama says the American people voted for his way to cut the debt.

