



Group walks for cause

Some parents with strollers (above) joined about 30 people Saturday morning for the annual Walk for a Grieving Heart, organized by the Family Life Commission of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Father Dana Clark (below right) walked with Susan McLemore, a member of the church, as they led the walk from the Sacred Heart School gym to Fike Park and back.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



Playwright gets a year probation

By Sam Dieter
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A playwright and former hotel manager from Colby got a year on probation for stealing from the Quality Inn here when he was the manager.

Everett Robert, 35, Hays, was sentenced to a year on probation instead of seven months in prison for theft of between \$1,000 and \$25,000, a level-nine nonperson felony, on Feb. 6, County Attorney Kevin Berens said.

Robert admitted to the theft Jan. 9 in District Court as part of a plea agreement. He was originally charged with stealing \$25,000 and \$100,000, a level seven felony,

while he worked at the Quality Inn between May 2010 and October 2011.

A warrant was issued for Robert's arrest on Feb. 9, 2012, but he was not arrested until Oct. 12, court records show. He was released Oct. 17 on a \$50,000 appearance bond.

Just before pleading guilty, Robert said he works as a playwright while studying English education at Fort Hays State University. He added that he does not handle money at this job, and that the people he works with know about the theft charge.

Jagdish Bhakta, who owns the Quality Inn here and in Wichita,

See "PLAYWRIGHT," Page 2

Music group wins Grammys

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A Kansas City music group that won two Grammy awards Sunday night includes a singer whose mother is from Colby.

Nickolas Stoppel, son of Colby native Sheree Stoppel and Dwight Stoppel, is one of 26 singers who make up the Kansas City Chorale. He was at the Grammy ceremony, where the group took first place

for Best Choral Performance and Best Classically Engineered Album for its recording "Life and Breath: Choral Works by Renee Clausen."

"It was so unreal being around all those great musicians and just this great atmosphere," Stoppel said. "I don't think it's settled in yet."

Stoppel said he auditioned for the 26-member group this summer.

See "GROUP," Page 2

County discusses forming central dispatch service

By Sam Dieter
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Thomas County Commissioners discussed forming a central dispatch service for the nine northwest counties of Kansas at their Monday meeting.

"I don't think people are friendly to the consolidation of counties, but they are

friendly to the consolidation of services," said Commission Chairman Paul Steele.

Commissioner Mike Baughn passed out a memorandum that pointed out how populations in rural counties have gotten both older and smaller in recent years. This, he pointed out, adds an incentive for counties to pool emergency and communications services.

Baughn said he went to a Kansas As-

sociation of Counties convention in November in Topeka, where he heard a report from the 911 Commission about the improvement of communications technology used by 911 dispatchers.

He suggested that emergency management, 911 dispatchers, jails and geographic information system software used by county officials could be consolidated.

The commissioners eventually decided

that Baughn would give a presentation on the topic at an annual meeting of officials in northwest Kansas counties, which will be run by officials from Sheridan County this year, and take place in the Frahm Theatre at Colby Community College. Baugh said the thought the meeting would be April 17.

The commissioners also discussed several bills in the state Legislature which

would could hamper consolidation efforts. Baughn said one bill would prohibit the use of municipal services outside the city or county providing them.

"That would be disastrous," he said, "because we already do a lot of things cooperatively together."

Steele said that House Bill 2072 would

See "COUNTY," Page 2

Top Democrat upset about block

By Richard Lardner
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Senate's top Democrat attacked Republican senators today for blocking Chuck Hagel's nomination to be President Barack Obama's next secretary of defense, saying it was "shocking" and "tragic" that the GOP would attempt such a move at a time when the U.S. military is engaged in so many places around the world.

Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said Republicans are filibustering Hagel's confirmation and that such a move is unprecedented. "Not a single nominee for secretary of defense ever in the history of our country has been filibustered," the Nevada Democrat said. "Never, ever."

A demand by Republican senators that the White House give them more information about what Obama was doing on the night of the deadly attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, has the effect of a filibuster.

Reid said Republicans notified him Wednesday night they would withhold the votes needed to advance Hagel's nomination. Reid said he considered that a "full-scale filibuster" because the Republican strategy would prevent Hagel's nomination from getting the required 60 votes.

Republicans are seeking "extraordinary requests" for information that will never be satisfied, Reid said.

The White House responded on Wednesday to the GOP's request for information about Benghazi, Reid said.

Reid set the stage Wednesday for a full Senate vote on Hagel, a former two-term Republican senator from Nebraska and twice-wounded Vietnam combat veteran. Reid filed a motion to limit debate and force a vote, which is expected to be held Friday. While Democrats hold a 55-45 edge in the Senate and have the numbers to confirm Hagel on a majority vote. But they need the support of five Republicans to clear the way for an up-or-down vote on him.

See "BLOCK," Page 2

Kids check out landing



DANIELLE FORSEBERG

A helicopter landed in the parking lot of the Buffalo Bill Cultural Center in Oakley on Wednesday. The Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center was holding a career fair for a group of gifted students from across the area, offering information on career choices - including becoming a pilot. Students learned

that graduates from the flight instruction program can expect to earn a beginning salary of about \$63,000 per year. Anthony Lyons of Dodge City Community College organized the landing.

