



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Opening statements made in trial

By Stephanie DeCamp

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Not one but two love triangles fed hard feelings that led to the death of Airman Corey Cook on Oct. 22, 2011, said the defense counsel for Dylan Coryell, who is charged with murder, aggravated battery and aggravated burglary in the case. Coryell's friend, Everett Urban, was

the one who wanted to fight that night, because Cook and his wife had a previous relationship, said defense attorney Justin Barrett, and Urban was the one who instigated plans for a fight.

Everyone was drunk, and few remember the events clearly or accurately. The prosecution, he argued, cannot prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Coryell snuck into the house where Cook slept and killed him intentionally.

Coryell, 22, has been in jail more than a year awaiting his trial, which had been scheduled for two weeks, from Monday to next Friday, March 29. However, attorneys picked up a day when they finished jury selection Monday in half the time allotted.

The second day began with opening statements from Barrett of Colby and prosecutor Nicole Romine, a state assistant attorney general stationed in Good-

land who handles major cases in western Kansas.

Seven witnesses came to the stand on Tuesday, all friends of Cook or Coryell or both. They included young adults who were at parties where both men began their evening, friends who rode in the car with Coryell on the way to confront Cook at a house in rural southeastern Decatur County and those who entered the house where Cook was staying north of the farm

town of Jennings.

Romine opened the day Tuesday by describing the usual party night for a bunch of friends in the countryside: drinking some beers, shooting some guns, listening to music and having some fun. That night, she said, there were two parties — with Coryell at one and Cook at the other. But there was one more thing these men

See "TRIAL," Page 2

Business holds open house at new location

Strutt Insurance Services plans an open house from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and Thursday at its new downtown location.

Co-owner Darvin Strutt said he combined F&M Insurance Store and Cersovsky Insurance to form the new agency, moving to a larger office at 1675 W. Fourth St.

"We've got plenty of room now," Strutt said.

Thursday, the agency will hold the monthly Business After Five event organized by the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

Strutt said he bought Cersovsky Insurance at the start of the year when Cindy Cersovsky retired.

Cersovsky said Strutt had promised her 10 years earlier he would buy the agency whenever she wanted to retire.

Strutt bought F&M Insurance from F&M Bank in June 1992. He and his wife Tammi also own Prairie Land Insurance in Brewster and Trauer Insurance in Hays. Darvin, originally from Oakley, and Tammi, who is from Palco, both moved here in the early 1980s.

School learns about new model

By Sam Dieter

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Curriculum Director Diana Wieland explained the state's new accreditation model to the Colby School Board Monday night with help from the school principals and a slide show.

The accreditation model is part of the "flexibility waiver" under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which gives districts an alternative to being evaluated according to the Bush-era No Child Left Behind Act. Wieland said the district is already using parts of the model and will be able to implement most of it in two years.

The old model used state assessment tests. They required every student to become "proficient" in math and reading, Superintendent Terrel Harrison said.

Wieland explained later that

No Child required every student to score as "proficient" by 2014, which, she said, is "impossible."

She also pointed the state tests only came once a year.

The new model, she said, measures a school's improvement. For instance, the lowest-performing 30 percent of students are rated against a state benchmark, then the school is given six years to cut the gap between these students and the benchmark in half.

Other ways in which a school will be measured include students' readiness for life. For instance, Wieland said, the state wants the school to make its students ready either for higher education or the work force by 2014.

Wieland said that under this model, classes need to be geared for learning about technology and future careers.

Parents and community mem-

See "SCHOOL," Page 2

County puts off employee pay raises

By Heather Alwin

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The Thomas County Commission talked about pay increases for county employees Monday, but put off a decision after a long discussion about how to even out pay rates for employees working similar jobs in different departments.

Commissioner Paul Steele said the landfill supervisor had asked to level out the wages of his employees, adding that pay for the register of deeds and deputy register should be increased to make them comparable with the county clerk and her deputy.

Steele asked County Clerk Shelly Harms for a spreadsheet displaying current and proposed wages for county workers. The commissioners planned to vote on

increases at their meeting Friday, March 29.

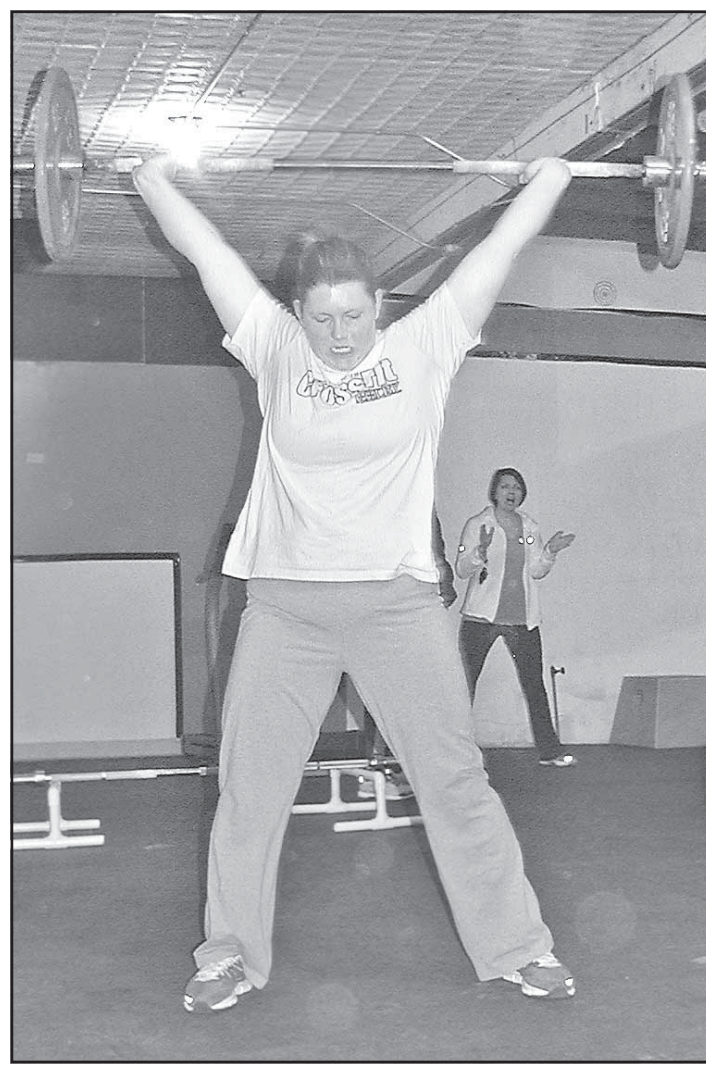
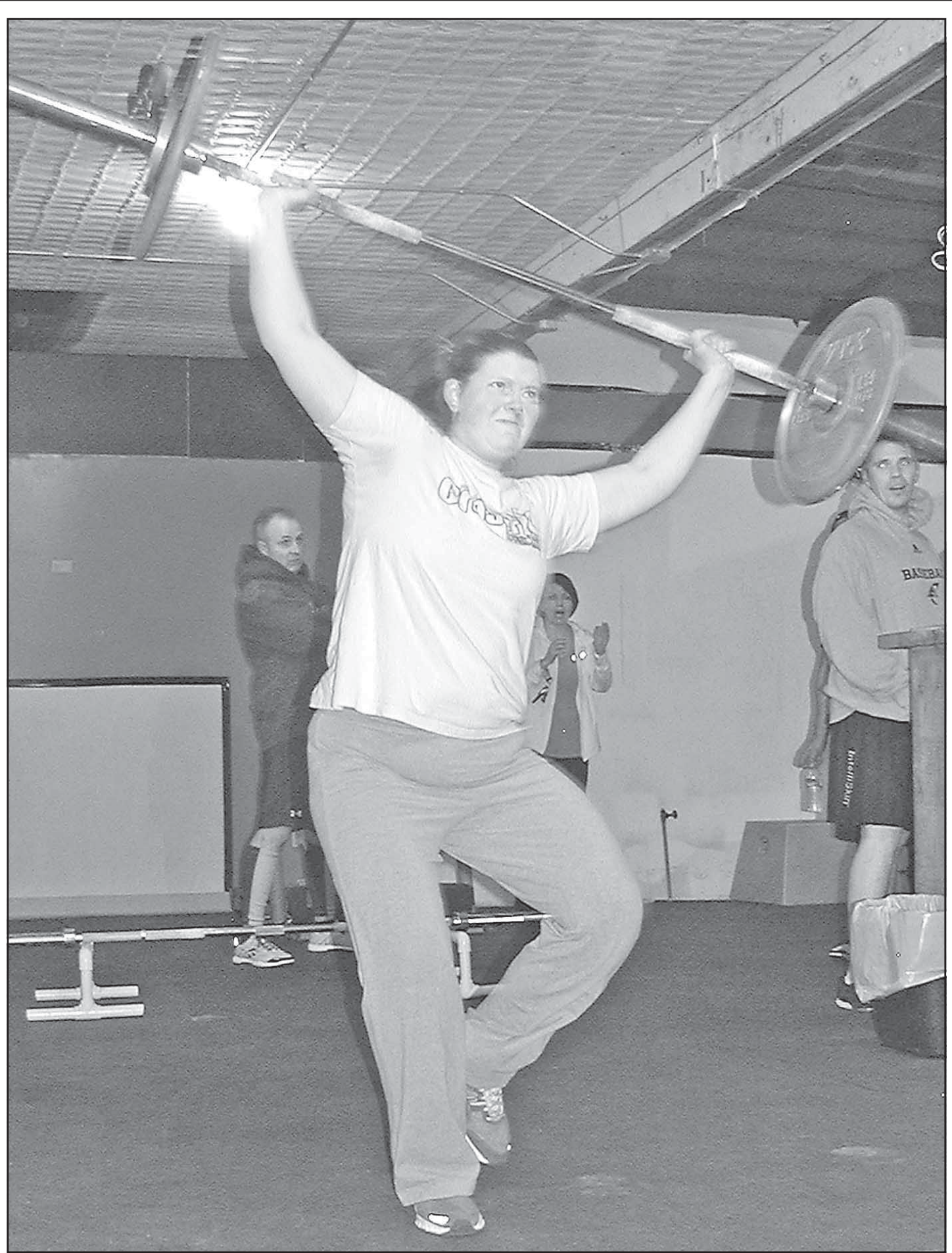
Steele said he doesn't want to see good, well-trained people slip away because of low pay. Salary increases will be financed by the increased revenue from formerly undervalued farmland that is now being correctly valued, he said, noting that the value of Thomas County agricultural use land increased 23.8 percent this year.

When Commissioner Byron Sowers remarked that the revenue will only increase if the county gets the money, Steele said, "We'll get the money or we'll sell the land."

Members of the Genesis-Thomas County food bank's board came in to talk about the rent the agency pays to the county for space in the Thomas County Office Complex on Range Avenue.

Commissioner Mike Baughn said a citizen had asked if the

See "COUNTY," Page 2



Workout center holds competition

Michelle Morris struggled to lift a weight over her head (above and left) March 7 at CrossFit Colby, while owner Heather Stapp got ready to lift her own weights (below). Both showed up that night to compete in lifting weights and doing other exercises. Heather's husband, Monty Stapp, who co-owns the business with her, said the competition had been announced online that day for patrons of the fitness chain worldwide.

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