



'14 budget process underway

By Heather Alwin
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The Thomas County Commissioners received more 2014 budget proposals at their meeting Friday. The commissioners have not made any formal decisions on budgets yet, but this is the first stage of the budgeting process.

Vicki Hubin of Western Kansas Child Advocacy Center asked the commissioners to give as much as they can but declined to request a specific dollar amount. The county gave \$2,500 to the center in 2013. This center serves children who

have been physically and sexually abused or those who have witnessed a crime, coordinating with law enforcement personnel and the county attorney. They also perform forensic interviews for law enforcement and provide therapy for child victims.

"Getting a child ready for trial is completely different than getting an adult ready for trial," said County Attorney Kevin Berens. "Without their expertise it would be completely different."

The center was involved in 38 cases in Thomas County last year.

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Agora market back Saturday

By Vera Sloan
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Agora, an open, central marketplace, will make its second annual appearance at 9 a.m. Saturday at the Colby United Methodist Church, 950 S. Franklin.

The event, which will run until 3 p.m., promises to be double in size from last year's.

Planners Jatón Denneler and Donna Bennett say more than 50 vendors have leased spots to display their wares.

"There will be lots of home-crafted items with some commercial items mixed in," said Denneler. "We have 70 spots and twice the number of vendors we had last year. Some vendors have reserved two and three spots for their merchandise."

Booths will be set up on the north side of the church building for local vendors and those coming in from as far as Wichita, Lakewood, Colo., and McCook, Neb.

Besides the many local artists who will be there to sell their goods, a missions mercantile will be going on in fellowship hall of

the church. Last year, items in the missions mercantile were nearly overflowing the area, and this year will be no different. Great bargains promise to be in store for those who can't resist a great buy.

Bennett said the mercantile resembles a large general store where you can come and buy quality items at great prices. "I know for sure a large nativity set with lots of pieces has been donated to be among the mercantile items," she said.

"Breakfast burritos will be served for breakfast by Juan-dul Mexican Food, a vendor from Atwood, as well as other great authentic Tex-Mex menu items during lunch. Porky's, another food vendor will also have a great selection for lunch, so there's no need to plan to cook at all on Saturday," she added, saying there will also be a large tent for dining space.

There will be a deejay, said Denneler, and music throughout the day.

There will be a great bake sale where busy home makers will be

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Joe Hickert (below), director of Thomas County Emergency Medical Services, assessed child victims from a May vehicle accident on Interstate 70. Candy Bryant (above center) helped another accident victim onto a stretcher while EMT

Leisha Carpenter talked to additional victims. Bryant, a paramedic, is the instructor coordinator for the department. Carpenter, the department's Brewster EMT, has been a volunteer for 26 years.

HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press

Emergency team growing

EMS Week at the end of May honors emergency medical personnel nationwide and drawing attention to the important services they provide for their communities.

In Thomas County, 18 members of the Emergency Medical Services team provide services for all types of medical emergencies. Director Joe Hickert said he typically has 14 emer-

gency responders available in Colby, two in Brewster and three in Rexford.

"The Colby Fire Department works very well with us," said Hickert. "We rely on them, and their expertise, heavily, as well as local law enforcement."

So far this year, Thomas County's Emergency Medical Services personnel have responded to 252 calls for a range of medical issues, including difficulty breathing, chest pain, suicidal thoughts, falls, premature birth, unattended deaths and vehicle wrecks. Last year, the crew responded to 675 calls. The department has also transferred 49 patients in the first five months of this year, up slightly from 111 total last year.

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services trains its own Emergency Medical Technicians, conducting classes as needed. Paramedic Candy Bryant recently finished teaching a class for 15 Emergency Medical Technicians from Atwood and Colby and will soon begin another course for about six from Brewster. This fall, she will teach an advanced class. This spring, she taught an advanced Emergency Medical

Technician transition class to transition department technicians to national certification.

Bryant also conducts cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid classes for families, babysitters and health care professionals.

Last April, the department began carrying medications for common problems like heart attacks, changing from a Basic Life Support organization to Advanced Life Support.

The department hopes to replace an aging ambulance with a refurbished one next year, saving the county tens of thousands of dollars over the cost of a new one. Hickert told the Thomas County Commissioners at Friday's meeting.

The refurbished ambulance costs about \$80,000, including a brand new chassis with a used box that has been updated with new air conditioning, floors and other features. Hickert hopes donors will step forward to help shoulder the cost burden for the community.

"You don't really need it until all of a sudden you need it," said Hickert, referring to the department's services.



Picnic in the Park in the rain



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Morgan Mengel brought blankets to Fike Park at noon Wednesday so Cameron Brooks, 1 (left), Kellen Brooks, 4, and Avery Seiwert, 7, could bundle up, but a heavy rain still forced them under the covered hut later. A small crowd braved the dark skies to hear Monica and Karla Bugbee sing at the first Picnic in the Park this summer.

Future police chief recognized by council

By Sam Dieter
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The Colby City Council recognized Ron Alexander as the newly chosen police chief at its Tuesday night meeting.

"I'm just looking forward to continuing my career in the community and looking forward to serving my community," Alexander said after the meeting.

The council members and other people at the meeting applauded as he was announced as the new hire for the spot. He was hired that same day by City Manager Tyson McGreer and will officially replace the current chief Randy Jones as the police chief on Thursday, Aug. 1, and start transitioning into the job right away.

He is a sergeant with the Colby Police Department, having worked his way up over 15 years with the department. He served briefly as the interim police chief last summer when Jones filled in as the interim city manager.

Jones announced his retirement at the May 7 council meeting. He served on the police department for 37 years.

In other business:
• McGreer reminded the council



Ron Alexander

that the city will have a public information hearing along with Thomas County and the Kansas Department of Transportation from 10 a. m. to 11 a.m. Friday. The purpose is to help de-

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