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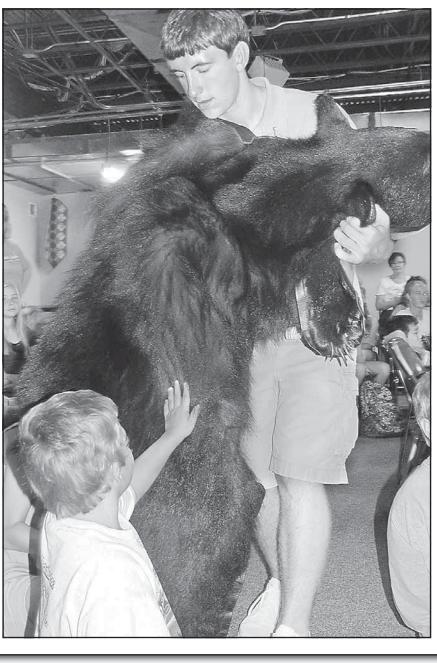


Rolling Hills Zoo visits

Kealy Dent showed off a stuffed penguin (above), Monday, one of the critters volunteers from the Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure put on display at the Pioneer Memorial Library. Most of the big animals were not alive, including the black bear (right), whose skin Tristan Irish held up for the crowd to see. But the zoo in Salina let some of its real animals, like this Madagascar hissing cockroach (below) out for a day trip to Colby. The library said just over 200 kids and parents showed up to check out the animals.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press





Commissioners get updates on landfill, Opportunity Zone

Colby Free Press colby.society@nwkansas.com

The Thomas County Commis-

sioners heard updates from the county landfill and area organizations at their meeting Monday. Landfill supervisor Larry Jump-

er provided sampling results from the landfill's monitoring wells. There were no unusual results in these tests, Jumper said. One well shows higher-than-allowable levels of trichloroethylene that is the result of illegal dumping of dry cleaning solvent from someone in Colorado, but this contamination has been monitored since its discovery in 2008.

Commissioner Paul Steele said

discovered. Without Jumper's investigation, the landfill could have been shut down, Steele said.

Currently, the levels in the well measure 0.0068 milligrams per liter, above the maximum allowable repayment available to each qualilevel of 0.005. The other sampling fying employee. The state prowells had undetectable levels of the chemical. Samples were also with no results above the maximum contaminant levels.

Wells are tested twice each year, in April and October, Jumper said. James Foster, a Rural Develop-

ment representative with the Kansas Department of Commerce, skepticism about the program's updated the commissioners on efficiency and effectiveness. changes to the Rural Opportunity

to rural Kansas counties.

Foster said the program's rules recently changed to allow employers to pay half of the \$3,000 per year maximum student loan vides the other half.

However, if an employer does tested for chromium and cadmium not provide any money for a qualifying employee, the county must pay it all, he said. Last year, Thomas County provided \$1,500, which was not enough to pay all the accepted applications.

Steele previously expressed

"I'm concerned that a guy could Zone program, which provides tax double-dip," Steele said, referring Jumper found evidence proving incentives and student loan repay- to the possibility that an employee

the illegal dumping when it was ment for individuals who relocate could obtain loan repayment from his employer and also from the Rural Opportunity Zone program.

Foster said applicants have to show a loan balance before the program will pay.

Foster suggested the county send letters to employers to ask if they want to participate in the program. This may help the county budget its funds more effectively, he said.

When asked whether the program entices qualified graduates to come to rural areas or merely provides a bonus to those who were already planning to live here, Foster said there are no hard numbers available either way.

Those who like the program

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City works on plan for raises

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press sdieter@nwkansas.com

The Colby City Council told the city manager to continue developing a new plan to figure city was an increase of up to 4 peremployees' raises after a discussion on how they will fit into next year's budget at its meeting Tuesday night.

prepared a proposal for the council to review in which employees over \$50,000. will not be given cost-of-living pay increases but instead raises based entirely on merit. No vote was taken, but McGreer got the up to 4 percent for those making OK from the council to continue up to \$40,000, up to 3 precent for to work on the scale and include those making up to \$50,000 and the new salary scheme in the 2013-2014 budget.

"I'm more of an, 'If you earn it, you can get it (person)," McGreer tor, pointed out that the city budsaid, "I don't like the shotgun ap-

In last years' budget, the city See "CITY," Page 2

paid employees \$2.86 million in salaries, he said. This year, because of some personnel changes, it will pay an estimated \$2.68 mil-

The old salary rate adjustment cent for employees making under \$30,000 a year, up to 2.5 percent for employees making up to \$40,000, up to 2 percent for those City Manager Tyson McGreer making up to \$50,000 and no merit increase for employees making

> The new rate adjustment would give an increase of up to 5 percent to those making under \$30,000. up to 2.5 percent for those making over \$50,000.

Debbie Zerr, city finance direcgeted a 3.6 percent cost-of-living

Grant sought for Amtrak

Kansas and Wichita are seeking plication Tuesday and a decision nearly \$13 million in federal monis expected in about three months. ey to complete the planning phase The Wichita Eagle reported (bit. of a proposed project that would ly/19nlCKv). extend Amtrak's Heartland Flyer passenger service from Wichita to Oklahoma City.

Heartland Flyer to Wichita and Newton and then connect the U.S. Department of Transporta-Wichita area with the Southwest Chief line to Oklahoma City.

includes \$3 million in matching said Wichita Vice Mayor Pete funds from the Kansas Depart- Meitzner, who has led the city's ment of Transportation, which efforts to land passenger rail seris contingent on \$2.3 million in vice. "There's not a big bucket matching funds from Oklahoma. The Wichita City Council is ex- See "AMTRAK," Page 2

WICHTA (AP) – The state of pected to formally support the ap-

The city and state are seeking part of \$473.8 million in federal TIGER, or Transportation Invest-The project would extend the ment Generating Economic Recovery, grants, according to the tion's website.

"We're going to have a lot The \$12.7 million grant project of competition for the money,"

Kansas caves could preserve humanity?

By Bill Draper

Associated Press

ATCHISON (AP) - After most of the world's population is wiped off the map by a wayward meteorsurvival of the human race might just depend on a few thousand people huddled in recreational vehicles deep in the bowels of an eastern Kansas mine.

That's the vision of a California man who is creating what he calls the world's largest private underground survivor shelter, using a complex of limestone caves dug more than 100 years ago beneath gently rolling hills overlooking the Missouri River.

"I do believe I am on a mission and doing a spiritual thing," said Robert Vicino, who has purchased a large portion of the former U.S. Army storage facility on the southeast edge of Atchison, about 50 miles northwest of Kansas City, Mo. "We will certainly be part of the genesis."

Before it comes time to ride out Armageddon or a deadly global pandemic, though, Vicino says the Vivos Survival Shelter and Resort will be a fun place for members to

take vacations and learn assorted survival skills to prepare them for whatever world-changing catastrophe awaits.

Jacque Pregont, president of the Atchison Chamber of Commerce, ite or hail of nuclear missiles, the said some people think the shelter plan sounds creepy or that Vicino has "lost his mind," while others are excited because they will finally get a chance to tour the property.

Atchison is known as the birthplace of Amelia Earhart and one of the most haunted towns in Kansas. Pregont said, so the survival shelter is likely to add to the town's

"It's quirky, and quirky gets attention," she said.

Recent Hollywood movies have done big business exploring themes about threats to the human race, either through climate shifts, meteor impacts or zombie invasions. And the National Geographic Channel show, "Doomsday Preppers," documents the efforts of Americans who are

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