

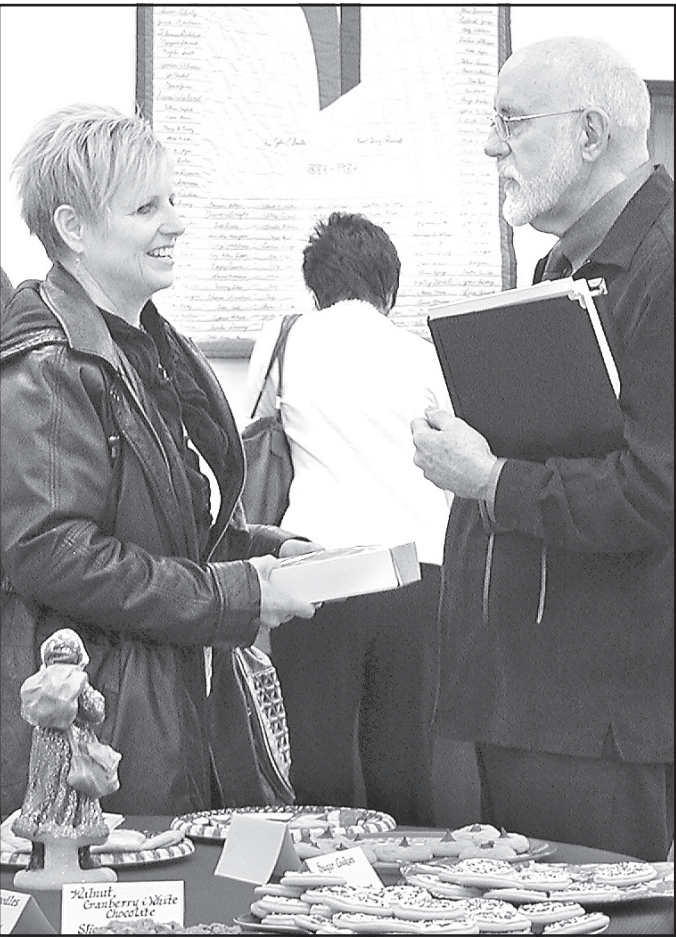


Chloe Liudahl took a seat at the piano Sunday afternoon at the Colby United Methodist Church. The private students of Pat Ziegelmeier, piano instructor at Colby Community College, staged a Christmas recital at the church.

## Cold day, busy church

Following a special music program Sunday at the Methodist church, and before the piano recital, Melissa Gepford (left, at right) and Carol Lovenstein decided what cookies they wanted at the church's Cookie Walk. Choir director Philip Shuman (below) talked with Amy Jennings near a table of tempting treats. Linda Jones (left, below right) and Shirley Malcolm couldn't resist sampling the cookies and other treats as they chose what to buy. The money made from selling the wide variety of cookies made primarily by church members will go to the church's missions.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



## Cops seek info about copper loss

The Thomas County Sheriff's Office is urging area farmers, ranchers and residents to be on the lookout this winter for suspicious activity that could be tied to copper thefts.

Copper thefts can increase over the winter, said Undersheriff Marc Finley, when agricultural equipment is left idle and unattended.

"We're asking the farming community to keep an eye out," he said.

Farmers may not notice the thefts until they try to use the equipment again in the spring, putting investigators at a disadvantage, the undersheriff said.

At least one theft has occurred this winter, on a farm southwest of Colby, he added.

There, the cables between three sprinkler towers were stolen. The stolen copper was probably only

worth a few hundred dollars, he said, but replacement parts will cost the farmer over \$1,000.

Sprinklers are a common target for copper thieves since they can sit unused and untended for months.

Finley encouraged anyone who sees unexpected activity around sprinkler rigs to take down the license-plate numbers and descriptions of any vehicles and call the sheriff's office.

Farmers are encouraged to report possible thefts immediately, he said, even if the stolen amount may be less than the farmer's insurance deductible.

The reports, said Finley, help his department assess the size of the problem, identify patterns in the thefts and come up with possible solutions.

## City budget changes passed

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press  
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The Colby City Council approved an amended \$22 million budget for this year at its meeting Tuesday night after approving spending increases of over \$1.2 million, mostly from federal and state money the city received.

No one from the public spoke on the budget during a public hearing about the increases, and it was approved without any discussion. The council discussed the budget revisions last month when it set the hearing date.

The city approved a budget \$20,854,882 in August, bringing the new budget up over \$22 million. Last year, the council passed

a \$20.4 million budget.

The water treatment fund was increased by over \$782,129 to continue operation of the city-run water treatment plant downtown after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency decided to continue operation of the Superfund cleanup site until at least April.

The special highway fund was increased by just over \$469,000 to reflect expenses for improvements to roads in town under the state Connecting Links program. Several projects, paid for mainly by the state, were expected to take several years, but were all completed this summer.

The E-911 fund was increased by about \$20,810 to buy a genera-

See "BUDGET," Page 2

## Plastic gun ban likely extended

By Alan Fram

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Senate vote to renew an expiring ban on plastic firearms capable of evading metal detectors and X-ray machines is shaping up as a bittersweet moment for gun control supporters, days before the anniversary of the deadly mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

Monday's vote to extend the prohibition on plastic guns for another decade responds to a growing threat from steadily improving 3-D printers that can produce

such weapons. But gun control advocates seem sure to lose an effort to impose additional, tougher restrictions on plastic firearms — a harsh reminder of their failure to enact any new federal gun curbs in the year since 20 first-graders and six educators were murdered in Newtown, Conn.

The slayings last Dec. 14 prompted the newly re-elected President Barack Obama to push gun control to the top of his domestic agenda. But Congress approved nothing, and gun control advocates face the same uphill

See "GUN," Page 2

## Community Can food drive tops expectations

The Women of K-State's "Community Can" food drive met with unexpected success last week after a couple of big donors pitched in.

When the last of the food and money was weighed and counted Tuesday night, the total added up to 2,682 pounds, more than a ton, and \$8,830.

The group held a reception for donors at the Thomas County Office Complex. They organized the drive last month as a competition among area groups and businesses to see who could bring in the most food and cash.

"We've had more donations than we ever thought possible," said Becky Darling.

American Implement brought 1,344 pounds of food to the drive, Darling said, about half the total weight. An anonymous donor gave \$5,000. She had heard that some businesses are already planning for next year's drive.

The money and food went to the Food 4 Kids Program, which sends food to school for hungry kids to take home to eat, and to the Genesis-Thomas County food bank.

About 15 volunteers and their friends showed up at the reception to hear who raised the most food and cash.

Winners were divided according to how many peo-

ple were in each group: category 1 was for groups of 25 or less people, category 2 for 26 to 50 people and category 3 for 51 or more people. They were also split up depending on whether they were donating to Food 4 Kids Program or to Genesis.

For the most food raised for Genesis, business owners Tuffy and Linda Taylor won in category 1, the Brewster Community and Churches in No. 2 and American Implement in No. 3. For the most money raised, the Gem Lions Club and Fred and Susan Haines tied in category 1, Brewster Community and Churches won in No. 2 and Colby United Methodist Church in No. 3.

For the most food gathered for the Food 4 Kids Program, Kelly Richmond and the Bunco Group won category 1, the Thomas County Courthouse won in No. 2 and American Implement won No. 3. For the most money for Genesis, the Gem Lions won category 1, anonymous donors No. 2 and the Colby United Methodist Church won No. 3.

