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Food kits help out students

The Colby Community College Food Pantry assembled 16 food kits for students remaining on campus during the winter break, each with supplies for about 23 days.

The pantry gave 28 kits to students, providing meals for five days during the Thanksgiving break. The food is donated by college faculty and staff. In addition to non-perishables, the pantry provides coupons for items that

require refrigeration.

Members of the Food Pantry Committee are Sami Tolle, Colleen Lopez, Leisa Hansen, Kathy Britton, Tom Moorhous, Ryan Sturdy, Jane McDougal and Lindsey Scammehorn.

The pantry, available to all students, is in the Title III Office in Thomas Hall. For information or to donate, contact Tolle at 460-5516.

DEBBIE SCHWANKE/Colby Community College

Food Pantry committee member Sami Tolle assembled food kits for college students remaining on campus during the winter break.



Courthouse structure OK, say engineering inspectors

By Heather Alwin

Colby Free Press
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Engineers from the architectural firm Walter P. Moore, hired to investigate the structural condition of the historic Thomas County Courthouse, revealed their findings to a packed commission chamber Monday.

Basically, they said the 106-year-old building is OK, ready for another century.

The engineers, Geoffrey Hose and Lurita McIntosh Blank, recommended a few fixes, but said the historic building could last another 50 to 100 years with proper maintenance.

The county has had the study's results since Nov. 13, but said they wanted the engineers to be the ones to present the findings to the public.

During their visual assessment of the courthouse, conducted in September, the engineers said, they focused on the roof framing

and exterior masonry.

"Generally, Thomas County Courthouse is in good condition," says the written report, "meaning that the building structure is performing as expected but does require localized repairs and maintenance consistent with a building of this age and construction."

The building, built in 1906 and 1907, was designed by Holland & Squires Architects. It is the only brick Romanesque Revival courthouse designed by well-known architect J.C. Holland, said Blank.

The engineers said the building does not show significant deterioration that might indicate foundation movement or settlement, one of the biggest concerns that

prompted the study.

Although they noted some conditions that might have indicated settlement in other buildings, the report says these conditions did not appear in patterns that typically indicate that.

For example, although there are cracks in a basement wall, there are no corresponding cracks on the exterior walls above those cracks.

The engineers said they were not certain what might have caused the cracking. But Hose said the cracks do not indicate a continuously shifting building since there are no cracks in the exterior walls that would have shifted, too, if the basement was shifting.

An unlevel floor in the county clerk's office appeared to the engineers to be a creep, or separation, of the floor joists rather than a shifting foundation. The engineers recommended additional, more invasive investigation of the joists.

Some windows that appeared to be "racked," or uneven in their frames, due to building settlement actually had damaged spring balances. The engineers were even able to reset one of the windows.

They inspected the building's masonry exterior, which the report says is in "excellent condition and requires only limited repairs and

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HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press
Geoffrey Hose and Lurita McIntosh Blank of Walter P. Moore, a firm with expertise in restoring old buildings, visited the Thomas County Courthouse in September. They delivered their findings at the county commissioners' meeting on Monday.

New jail 'No. 1 need'

By Heather Alwin

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Getting a jail built is the "No. 1 need in the county," Commissioner Mike Baughn said at a meeting last week.

Several aspects of the county's current jail are inadequate, according to a report from Dr. Allen Beck of Justice Concepts Inc. obtained by the county commissioners as part of the design process for a new jail.

Commissioner Paul Steele said the existing jail was "obsolete" when it was built in 1975.

The jail has experienced security problems in the past, said Undersheriff Marc Finley. Blind spots that make it difficult for jailers to see the inmates at all times, for example, and it is difficult to keep co-defendants separated from each other because of the exercise area's design.

Among the design flaws Beck's report lists is the

booking room, where inmates are processed into the jail, which the report says is "woefully inadequate."

In a modern jail, booking functions are separated into different areas and rooms, since the process involves fingerprinting, photographing, inventorying personal property and taking personal information.

"The lack of space in the Thomas County Jail has resulted in having to cram all of those functions, plus more, into a single small area," says the report. The lack of space is the result of converting additional cells into storage rooms "and because of initial poor design of the jail."

Just this month, an inmate grabbed a pen from an officer, threatening himself and the officer in the confined space. A second officer had to be called to help secure the situation.

The back entrance, where arrestees are taken into the jail, is also more dangerous due to its design. It lacks the sally port common to modern jails, says the report.

A sally port is similar to a drive-through garage with doors at both ends. Law enforcement officers drive in at one end, jailers close the entrance door



HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press

At the county jail, laundry, kitchen, food storage and dishwashing functions are all combined into one converted cell.

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