



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Purchase of Colby Plaza finalized

# Heartland Christian School to relocate in Colby

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Heartland Christian School, located in Mingo, has purchased Colby Plaza, the shopping area in northwest Colby including the old Gibson's Store, IGA grocery, and Dollar General. They bought the property from a bank in Dallas which owned the entire complex. They hope to be in it by the next school year, 2002-2003.

"We are trying to feel the leading of the Lord

and this is the way he has directed us and so we are pursuing that goal," said Rick Roberts, school administrator.

"We have been researching for the last six months. It wasn't finalized until last week, but we believe that by moving the school into Colby that is where we see the future of our school," Roberts said.

According to Roberts, the largest number of students, probably 80-85 percent, are from Colby, which was one reason for choosing that

location. The school has had families from the Brewster area, and as far away as Goodland interested, but because of the distance to Mingo it was too prohibitive for them to attend.

"The location on the west side of Colby will provide an alternative for Christian parents who are looking for a solid-based Christian-based education for their children. We want to provide that for them. Right now we are meeting with an architect to get some plans developed. We are looking at school year 2002-03,"

Roberts said. Renovation will start first in Dollar General, Roberts said, which is in the best shape. Tentative plans are to develop that facility into educational space. They are looking into the possibility of using the old IGA grocery store as a gymnasium, perhaps raising the roof. There are no plans for the old Gibson's building at this time, since it would need major renovation, due to a water pipe leak after the store was vacated, he said.

Roberts said that most of the work will be

done by volunteers, who will be last year 60. At present the school uses the Mingo Bible Church facilities. The new enlarged facilities will allow the school to expand to include grades K-12. Funds from a sizable endowment by an anonymous donor were used to purchase the property.

"We don't know what God has in store for us," said Roberts. "We are trying to go where he directs us."

Roberts can be contacted at 462-6419.

## Sales tax proposal on agenda

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

A proposed one percent city sales tax for economic development will head the discussion at the Colby City Council meeting on Tuesday. A proposal for an air ambulance at the Colby airport will also be discussed.

The proposal, brought to the council by the Economic Development Liaison Committee, would create a five-year tax to provide funds for economic development through grants and loans and for recreational improvements designed to attract visitors.

Midwest Corporate Aviation and Air Evac Lifeteam, both of Wichita, have invited both Colby and Goodland to submit proposals for an ambulance stationed at the airport by Aug. 15.

The council will discuss the desire to submit a proposal, the cost basis and the available funding for such a proposal.

The council will also hear an appeal from Rod Eisenbise concerning a proposed rezoning of an area south of Third Street on Franklin.

## Wreck sends Selden couple to the hospital

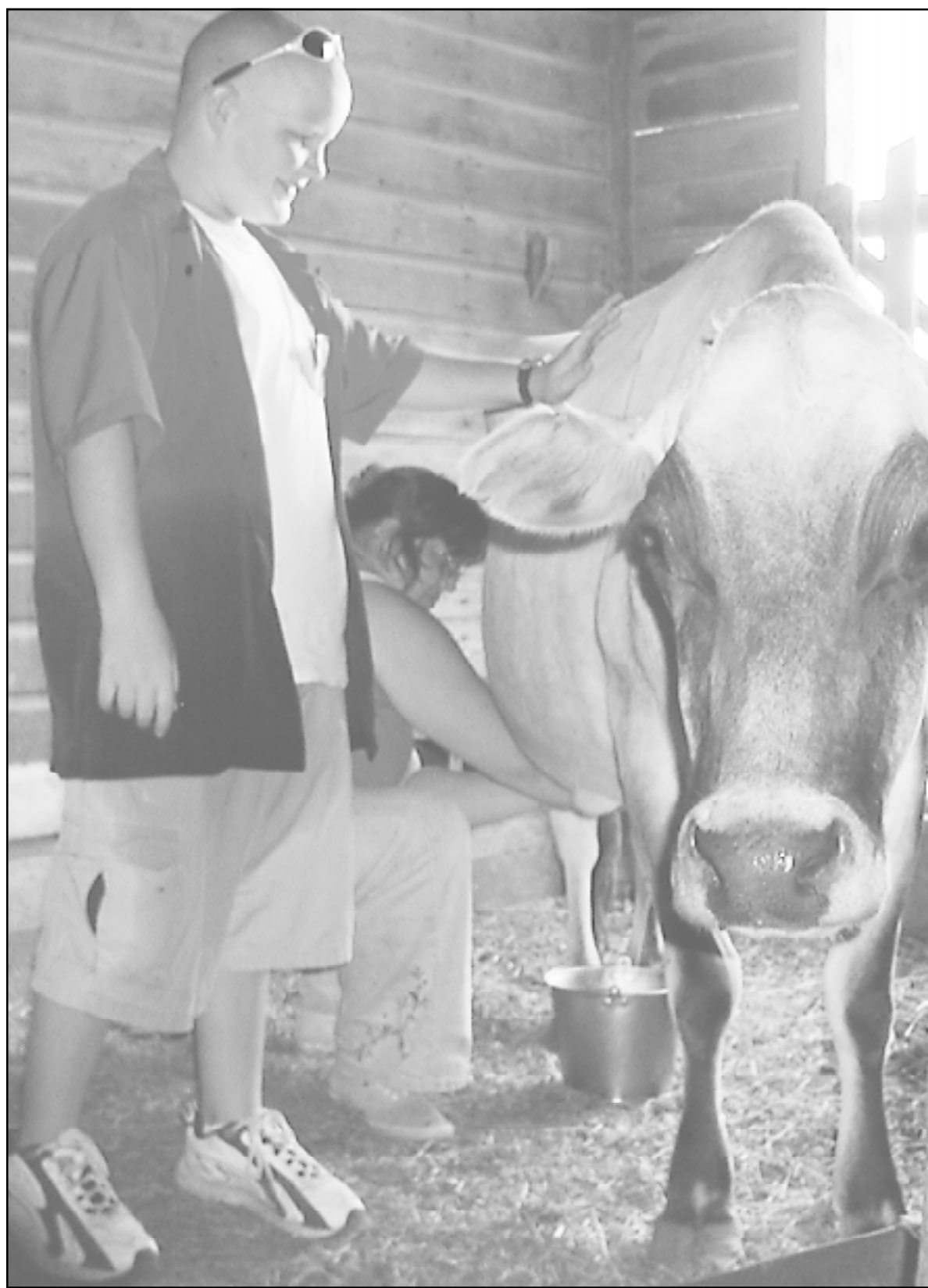
A one-vehicle roll-over resulted in a Selden couple being transported to Citizens Medical Center in Colby on Thursday afternoon.

According to the Kansas Highway Patrol, 71-year-old Marietta Stacey was eastbound in a 1987 GMC pickup on U.S. 83 about four miles west of Selden when she went off the north side of the roadway and lost control at about 4:15 p.m..

The vehicle rolled once and came to rest on its wheels.

Stacey and her husband, 78-year old Cecil Stacey, were taken to the Colby hospital by a Thomas County ambulance with what were described by troopers as minor injuries.

## Got milk?



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Johnathan Schmidt, one of the "littles" in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County program pets Jovi, a 12-year-old Jersey, as Chris Moore, Prairie Museum registrar, showed him and others how to milk a cow at the 'Big For A Day' event held Saturday. More than 40 "bigs" and "littles" attended the special event to familiarize adults on how the program works, along with fun activities for children currently involved in the big brother and big sister program, said Tami Grandison, director.

## New device to shock heart is approved for local ambulances

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Josh Buffington, emergency medical services' director and assistant director Martin Rinehart brought information about a new automatic external defibrillator (AED) to Friday's Thomas County Commissioners meeting.

This is a device, Buffington said, that is used for diagnosis as well as to shock the heart. The defibrillator, which was on the Colby ambulance, had developed a problem, which would cost \$2,500 to repair. He said he wants to replace it. He said it was one of the most important pieces of equipment on the ambulance and is used almost every run.

Buffington said the current defibrillators are monophasic, which allows the heart to be shocked once with a high joule setting. They propose to purchase a biphasic unit, which allows the heart to be shocked twice, but with a lower joule setting. The hospital is also considering this upgrade to better serve the community. Estimated costs were \$7,300 from Physio Control and \$10,165 from Zoll.

Buffington said a defibrillator is expected to last about five years, and the one that broke was six years old. He plans to replace one a year with the biphasic units for all the ambulances in the county. He has the money in the budget. The commissioners approved.

Buffington said total runs for 2001 to date is 300, which is six runs ahead of last year. Total remittance to date is \$41,099.18, and remittance runs about 30-45 days behind scheduled. Of 13-14 runs, they collected on all but one.

Buffington said he and Duane Wright of Citizens Medical Center are working on putting public access defibrillators in all of the law enforcement vehicles as well as prime locations, such as the community building.

He said the new ambulance is being built, and has gone to the assembly line. He has a bid of \$5,300 on the old ambulance from Miltonvale.

The commissioners also devoted many hours on Friday to hearing reports from health insurance brokers

before making a decision to stay with the present insurance company, but changing brokers.

The new broker, Kaw Valley Insurance, Rossville, will be providing coverage through Corporate Benefits Services of America, headquartered in Minneapolis, Minn.

The county's former broker, Inter-mountain Benefits, Denver, could not give the commissioners a firm estimate of costs, but Kaw Valley did agree to a cost of \$141,197.28 for brokering coverage, which the commissioners said would be a savings while still providing good insurance coverage to the employees. Based on information presented, the county also changed from its partially-funded insurance coverage through the former broker to a fully-funded program with the new broker. Insurance premiums have gone up considerably during the last year, and the commissioners said they believe the new broker will provide more economical insurance along with good coverage.

In other business:

- The commissioners discussed the tar blobs in the parking lot which are getting on tires and shoes and tracking into the law enforcement center. The lot has been sanded, but the tar is hot and sticky. Charles Schwanke is on the agenda for today's meeting to discuss an overlay for the lot. Or, they can pay \$20,000 for the road department to put on a hot mix overlay. In the meantime, people are asked to watch where they walk and drive.

- They discussed an inquiry about one of the departments about funeral leave for an ex-spouse, and for part-time help. They referred the department to the county policy, and said they didn't want to change the policy.

- They appointed Mary R. Ceck as county appraiser for a four-year term beginning July 1. She is a certified Kansas appraiser. Kansas law requires they appoint an appraiser every four years.

- They agreed to replace some plaster which is falling off in the men's restroom downstairs.

## Governor still lurks as potential big player in Western proceedings

TOPEKA (AP) — State regulators have finished several weeks of hearings on rates and a planned corporate restructuring for the state's largest electric company.

The three members of the Kansas Corporation Commission have until July 25 to decide on a request from Western Resources Inc. for a \$150.5 million rate increase. The KCC also is reviewing Western's plan to split its electric utilities from its other business interests.

Rates for thousands of Kansans and a \$4.4 billion merger involving Western and the Public Service Company of

New Mexico, or PNM, hang in the balance. The KCC has heard conflicting opinions about both from attorneys, consultants and consumer advocates.

But the person who is potentially the biggest player in the Western proceedings hasn't been inside the KCC's hearing room. He is Gov. Bill Graves, who appointed all three commissioners.

A key question is whether Graves will intervene by sending signals to the KCC about what he wants, either by making public statements or by exerting pressure behind the scenes.

Attorneys involved in the case say they don't expect Graves to intervene,

at least not directly. However, that concern still exists.

"We live in a fish bowl, and I'm sure the commissioners would not be unaware if the governor has strong feelings," said Walker Hendrix, consumer counsel for the Citizens' Utility Ratepayers Board, which represents residential and small business consumers.

The KCC is scheduled to meet Tuesday for an administrative meeting during which members will discuss Western's proposed rate increase. They're expected to give at least a few hints about what will be in an order.

Western contends it needs the in-

crease to cover investments in electric generating plants and inflation in the cost of its daily operations. However, the KCC's staff has proposed a cut in rates of nearly \$92 million, and critics suggest Western is trying to force ratepayers to subsidize its unregulated business interests.

The rate case is likely to play a significant role in determining whether Western's deal with PNM goes through. PNM officials have been watching the proceedings.

The KCC doesn't have a time table for deciding when Western can offer its shareholders the right to buy stock in

Westar Industries, the subsidiary that holds its unregulated business interests. The rights offering is the first step toward the PNM merger.

Western wants to set up Westar as a separate company. It would separate its KPL division and KGE subsidiary, which provide electricity to 636,000 Kansas customers, and merge them with Albuquerque-based PNM.

The New Mexico company would form a new holding company, issue \$1.5 billion in stock and assume \$2.9 billion in debt.

Critics of the deal argue that Western is trying to stick all of its debt with

KPL and KGE, even though much of it is associated with Western's acquisition of the financially troubled Protection One security firm in November 1997. Western says because its financial operations are consolidated, it can't determine how much debt belongs with the utilities.

Traditionally, the KCC has been fairly independent, operating much more like a court than an executive branch agency.

"It is a unique critter," said former KCC Chairman Timothy McKee, now an attorney representing the city of Wichita.

## Briefly

### Weather: 80s mentioned

The temperature could slide into the 80s on the July 4th holiday in the northwest Kansas area, says the National Weather Service. Specifically for Colby, look for this weather story to unfold. Tonight, a 20 percent chance for thunderstorms early, then clearing, with lows in the middle 60s. Tuesday, mostly sunny, breezy, highs 90-95 and south winds 15-25 mph. Tuesday night, clear, lows in the middle 60s. Wednesday — July 4th holiday — partly cloudy, thunderstorms and highs in the 80s. Colby's weekend temperatures: highs, Friday 97, Saturday 96 and Sunday 94; lows,

Saturday 61, Sunday 66 and this morning 61. There was a total of 0.10 inches of precipitation during the weekend. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 84 degrees. The records for July 2: 104 in 1973 and 43 in 1924. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Colby sirens to sound again

The city of Colby is planning to test the tornado siren warning system, weather permitting again on Tuesday as

part of work being done on the dispatch communications system, according to technology director Mike Albers. The tests will be at random during the day.

### Pool to close early on Fourth

The Colby Municipal Swimming Pool will close at 4 p.m. on the Fourth of July, according to pool officials. The pool will reopen at its regular times on Thursday. In addition, swimming lessons on the Fourth will be canceled and make-ups will be done Friday, July 6 at the same times. For information or questions, call 462-4429.

### Landfill, offices to close

The Thomas County landfill will be closed on July 4th, according to Larry Jumper, supervisor. All county offices will also be closed, county officials said.

### No Free Press July 4th

The Colby Free Press will not publish a newspaper on the July 4th holiday. Employees will be given the day off to spend with family and friends. "Normal operations will resume at 8 a.m. Thursday, July 5 — whatever normal is in newspapering," said Tom (TD) Dreiling, publisher.

