



COLBY FREE PRESS

New group offers many services

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Wings Upon the Prairie, Inc., a new nonprofit organization formed in Colby for people with severe mental health problems, provides a drop-in center where they may come for recreation, visiting and peer counseling, according to George Aumiller, president.

The center is located at 1980 West 4th and is open Friday from 5-8 p.m.; Saturday 5-8 p.m.; and Sunday 2-8 p.m. Those attending can be past or present consumers with mental illness. The center will be open on weekends when High Plains Mental Health is not open, and will offer peer counseling for someone in need of help, or the board can help individuals get other needed help. A grand opening is planned for later. The organization has a board of officers to include Aumiller as president, Betty Groblebe, vice-president and Paula Bixenman, secretary.

Activities such as barbecues and games, having exercise equipment, along with a television, VCR, and video games, mainly for socialization are planned at the center, said Groblebe.

"We still need furniture — desk, VCR, TV, deep freezer, kitchen supplies like as pots, pans and utensils, a cook stove, and an answering machine," said Aumiller.

According to Gary Parker, Colby, of the Kansas Consumer Advisory Council for Adult Mental Health, *Wings Upon the Prairie, Inc.* is one of 20 such organizations in Kansas. Most mental health systems in Kansas have only one, but because the High Plains Mental Health is so large, they are allowed to have two, one in Hays, and one in Colby.

He said when the council determined there was an interest in Colby to start this type of organization, he was pleased to see it get started in his hometown.

"They have done a super job," Parker said, "and it will be a positive thing for Colby toward eliminating the stigma associated with mental health in the community."



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Cutter Kvasnicka played with a toy phone while with his mother, Angie, was interviewed by the Free Press. He required two surgeries to correct excessive blood vessels in his brain. The Women of Faith from the Assembly of God are heading up a relief effort to help the Kvasnickas pay their medical bills.

Plans to help family announced

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

From looking at the healthy, blue-eyed 10-month-old, one would never know that Cutter Kvasnicka was born with a life-threatening condition requiring two surgeries in the first weeks of his life.

The condition also left his parents, Angie and Clint, heavily in debt. Although Children's Hospital and Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, both of Denver, have forgiven many of the bills, the couple still has about \$46,000 in bills, said Angie.

"We originally owed about \$300,000," she said. "We just keep paying on it."

To help, the Women of Faith, a

group from the Assembly of God, have decided to hold a fund-raiser at the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Festival in Colby this weekend at Bourquin's Campground.

"We're going to have food and crafts on sale," said Kim Schriener, one of the organizers.

"There will be sloppy joes, hot dogs and baked goodies."

Festival organizers will also have a special gate so those who just want to take part in the concessions won't need to pay the entry fee.

The group is also offering a hand-crafted nativity set, on display at the His Shop in downtown Colby, as a fund-raiser.

Cutter was born with what is medically termed 'Arterial Venous Malfor-

mation of the Great Vein of Galen.' According to his mother, "He basically had too many blood vessels in his brain." The additional blood vessels were causing congestive heart failure, where the heart is unable to handle the amount of fluid it needs to pump.

Doctors had to put about six feet of platinum wire, about the thickness of a human hair, in the blood vessels through the umbilical cord. After the wire was put in place, it rolled up and blocked off the blood vessels.

The Kvasnickas will be going back to Denver on Aug. 7 to find out if anything else needs to be done.

Cutter is off most of his medication and is improving every day, according to his mother.

County employees pack meeting to air insurance concerns

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

About 30 county employees met with the Thomas County Commissioners at their Monday afternoon meeting regarding health insurance. The commissioners had decided to go with a different insurance company in the coming year, and employees voiced concerns that they would have to spend more out of pocket. The group met in the courtroom to accommodate the crowd.

Effective Aug. 1, the commissioners had proposed to go with a fully insured program from Corporate Benefit Services of America, Inc.

Donita Applebury was spokesperson for the group. She said they had several concerns about changes on the policy. The deductible would go from \$200/single and \$400 for total family to \$500/single and \$1,500 for total family; prescriptions would go from \$5 for generic and \$10 for name brand, to \$15 for generic and \$30 for name brand. The new company would only pay half if the patient went to Denver, compared to 80 percent in Wichita.

Other employees voiced similar concerns, saying out-of-pocket expenses will triple under the new program.

The commissioners said they had not understood the new program to be that way, but Randy Dick, Kaw Valley Insurance representative, would be at the courthouse that afternoon, and those employees who had voiced their concerns were asked to meet with him in the commissioners room.

When Dick got there, he told the group that Corporate Benefit Services had reviewed the information on the group and had decided not to insure them because of past claims.

The commissioners then decided to go with Central Benefits of Ohio on a partially self-funded package. Accepting employee's input, they made some changes in the proposed plan. Office visit co-pay was changed from \$20 to \$12. Prescription co-pay was changed to \$10 for 90 days, instead of \$20 for

30 days. The county also kept Sloan's Lake of Denver, a present provider, which provides for services in Denver.

Proposed rate information was \$233.54 single, \$416.49 employee and child; \$453.87 for employee and spouse; and \$684.62 for family. However these rates may change due to changes in the coverage. The commissioners said next year they will appoint a committee of employees to research and recommend insurance. The county will pay the single rate for each employee with other rates, being the insured's responsibility.

In other business:

• Bob Luck and Dewayne Augustine asked about reopening a road between McDonald's and I-70. He said the Columbian Hall (Knights of Columbus) had received a donation of property south and west of McDonald's and needed access. Commissioners Glen Kersenbrock said he believed that was a county road, or possibly a township road, and had never been officially closed. It had been barricaded at the corner east and south of McDonald's to keep trucks from driving out there and getting stuck, since it exited from the truck parking at McDonald's. The commissioners will research the question and to be sure.

• Sue Taylor, director of the Thomas County Historical Society, brought the society's proposed budget for next year. She said they are asking for the same amount of money, \$6,500.

• John Galli, cemetery board president, reported the board was thinking about constructing an archway at the front entrance to the cemetery. He said workers had completed the fence along the new section of the cemetery along Country Club Drive. They hope to be able to extend it all around the property. It had cost \$200 per running foot, and they had completed 900 feet and hoped to get some donations to complete the other 1,800. They poured 600 feet of cement. He said there had been a water leak in the cemetery to the old hydrants and they had turned the water off. The newer hydrants are still on.

Today marks the 20th anniversary of KC fatal skywalk collapse

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Sally Firestone went to the Friday night tea dance with three friends after work. She was all dolled up, standing on a suspended walkway at the Hyatt Regency downtown, enjoying a dance contest in the hotel lobby below.

The last thing she remembers is hearing a loud "crack."

Chuck Hayes and his then-wife, Jane, were to meet friends at the year-old luxury hotel before taking in a movie. They were standing near the atrium when tons of concrete and steel came tumbling down.

Ron and Grace Trefts of St. Louis, in town for a florists convention, had just eaten dinner at the hotel and were on their way to watch the revelers from one of the graceful skywalks spanning the lobby. First, Grace Trefts wanted to check on their children back home, and Ron Trefts went to get his pipe he'd left in the car.

The delay probably saved their lives.

Stories abound about how the lucky ones escaped death when the Hyatt's skywalks collapsed July 17, 1981, in what remains the deadliest structural failure in the nation's history. One-hundred fourteen people were killed and more than 200 others were injured when steel connections supporting the

concrete and glass skywalks failed.

The Hyatt collapse forever changed the lives of those who were there that night and was a catalyst for changes in construction practices nationwide. Ultimate blame was pinned on the two structural engineers who designed the skywalks.

"It could've been prevented," said Hayes, who recovered from broken legs and a fractured back.

The night of the collapse, there was an overflow crowd at the city's newest luxury hotel with some people seated at second-floor tables overlooking the lobby and others gathered on the 120-foot walkways.

"The people were dancing and clapping. Everyone was happy and having a good time," recalls Grace Trefts, now 63.

At 7:04 p.m., the band started playing Duke Ellington's "Satin Doll" as a dance contest got under way. About a minute later, the fourth-floor walkway split in two places near the center, falling down onto the second-story walkway, which also collapsed.

"I remember hearing a loud noise and the next thing I remember, I was covered with chunks of concrete," said Hayes.

The couple with Hayes escaped un-

injured and helped lift rubble off his face. His wife lay severely injured nearby, though she later recovered.

The Trefts heard the commotion and frantically searched for one another. They met at the bottom of a stairway.

"There were a lot of electrical wires and sparks. I think a water main broke because there was a lot of water on the floor," Grace Trefts said. "Dust was still rising. We all were very, very frightened, but it was a controlled hysteria."

John Tezon, a paramedic who responded to the Hyatt, vividly remembers the carnage and cries for help.

"I had 10 years under my belt at the time, and had seen a lot of things up to that point, but this was overwhelming," Tezon said.

Rescue workers spent the next 14 hours pulling victims, dead and alive, from the tangle of steel and concrete. Cranes and forklifts moved heavy slabs of concrete so emergency crews could reach the injured. A firefighter performed an on-the-spot amputation with a chain saw to free one victim. City buses lined up outside to cart the walking wounded to hospitals.

Sally Firestone lay unconscious and trapped for hours under the debris. The most severely injured of the victims,

Colby couple remembers; sister-in-law hurt

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Paul and Judy Wintz of Colby remembered the Hyatt Regency collapse 20 years ago today through the eyes of a family member who witnessed the disaster firsthand.

Paul's brother, Francis, and his wife, Betty, lived in the Kansas City area and were among hundreds attending the tea dance.

Francis escaped any major injuries that evening, but his wife wasn't as lucky. She was trapped and later hospitalized for more than a month.

"I think the reason my brother was spared," Paul said on Monday, "was because he had gone for refreshments and left his wife at one of the tables in the dance area (on the sec-

ond floor)."

Recounting the events, Paul said his brother was frantic when he heard the deafening sound of concrete falling and cries for help. As he made his way back to the area where his wife was seated, he found her under a lot of debris with her right leg, arm, and shoulder broken.

There were so many people injured that night, he said, that it took a long time to get everyone medical attention. "My brother's wife was placed on a board for transport, but she laid around for quite awhile waiting to be taken to the hospital," he said.

"It took her a long time to recover from her injuries," Paul said, "and she still needed assistance once home from the hospital."

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The largest settlement — about \$12

million — went to Firestone.

The Trefts and anyone else inside the hotel at the time of the collapse were eligible to receive \$1,000. By the time the Trefts decided to claim their money, the filing deadline had passed.

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Briefly

Weather: Just plain hot

Don't look for any relief from the heat for the rest of this week, the National Weather Service forecast center advises in its daily forecast issued at 11 a.m. today. Lows through Friday are expected to be in the middle 60s with highs generally in the middle 90s. Precipitation possibilities are rated at no better than 20 percent, via thunderstorms. Winds will be from the south around 5-15 mph. Clear skies will prevail. Colby's high Monday was 97 and the overnight low this morning was 68. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 87 degrees. Precipitation for the month remains at 0.63 inches. The records for July 17: 107 in 1930 and 49 in 1900. (*The daily temperatures, precipitation and*

records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Pickin' On the Plains starts Friday

For the sixth year, Pickin' On the Plains will feature outdoor bluegrass music for all ages, according to organizers. The event is planned this Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Bourquin's Campground in Colby and will feature eight bands, two cowboy poets, along with many food vendors and activities. On Friday, entertainment begins at 6 p.m. and concludes around 10:15 p.m.; Saturday events begin at 10 a.m. with a youth contest and entertainment throughout the day until 10 p.m. On Sunday, the gospel sing-along begins

at 10 a.m. Tickets are available at Bourquin's Campground, House of Wood Furniture, Dave's His Shop and the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau. For information, call 462-7643 or 1-800-611-8835.

Fair activities noted

Judging of 4-H Clothing will be held on Monday and Tuesday, July 23 and 24, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Public Fashion Revue will be at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, also at the church. The public is welcome to the fashion revue. Arts and crafts judging will be at 8 a.m. Thursday, July 26, in the 4-H Building. Fair set-up will be at 7 p.m., also on July 26. In addition, fair superintendents will

meet at 6 p.m. on July 26 at the 4-H Building. The open class horse show will be at 9 a.m. Saturday, July 28. Booth construction will be from 1-5 p.m. Sunday, July 29 and from 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday, July 30, in the 4-H Building.

Relay meeting Thursday

The annual Relay for Life is less than one month away and organizers say they are in desperate need of teams. According to Bob Coleman, one of the coordinators, there is a meeting planned for Thursday beginning at 6:30 p.m., at the State Farm office, 905 E. 4th, Colby, and anyone wanting to help is encouraged to attend. This year's Relay for Life will be held Friday and Saturday, Aug. 10 and 11.

