



COLBY FREE PRESS

Foundation reaches \$300,000 goal

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

With less than two weeks away from its deadline to raise \$300,000, the Thomas County Community Foundation held a special meeting Tuesday to announce it had reached its goal.

Colby Mayor Warren Hixson, on behalf of the city, presented the board of directors with a check for \$150,000, which is from the drug forfeiture fund seized in January of 2000.

The decision to use a portion of the funds for this purpose was jointly reached between Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, Randy Jones, chief of police and Hixson.

"This is an exciting time for all of us and I want to congratulate the Foundation board for their courage in asking the community for \$300,000," Hixson said during the presentation.

"You believed in yourselves and together you and the community made this happen," he said.

Hixson spoke of how lucky the community of Colby is because it dreams and has vision.

"And it more than just dreams," he said, "Colby makes those dreams come true as evidenced time and again."

He cited example after example to include Sen. August Lauterbach, then head of the Ways and Means Committee, who was responsible for the

"curve" on Interstate 70 that would insure Colby's future with interstate traffic. "It was dreams that made Colby High School, Citizens Medical Center, and Colby Community College realities."

In addition, Hixson thanked Scott Sitton, Colby police officer, for his role in making the stop that later would lead to the forfeited money.

Hixson said it was important to wait on the decision to fund the remaining \$150,000 for the Foundation until efforts had secured at least half the amount from other sources.

Others present at the special meeting included Bert Withers and Paul Layland, who helped contact people throughout the county about the fund drive.

"We certainly want to thank them for all their help," said Becky Donelan, director of the Foundation.

Cindy Black, president of the board, said that now the Foundation can move forward in making a difference for all the people in the county.

"We want to thank the citizens of Thomas County for believing in the Foundation enough to make it a reality for all Thomas County," she said.

Donelan is also inviting anyone who planned to participate in the challenge grant to go ahead and send their contribution or pledge.

"Even though we have met the minimum dollar amount of the challenge," she said, "we would like everyone to be part of the founding of the Thomas County Community Foundation."

Donelan urges anyone who still wants to be a founder to send their donation.

As for the future, the Foundation will receive \$100,000 of the match from the Kansas Health Foundation, based in Topeka, in each of the grant years to include 2001, 2002 and 2003.

"Because we met the challenge, we will receive a bonus of \$10,000 to be awarded in 2002 for the health and well-being of children in Thomas County," she said.

More information about that bonus and timeline will be forthcoming, she added. Now that the match is in hand, the foundation will begin endowing funds for charitable causes and groups in the county, she said.

"We would also like to thank the Kansas Health Foundation for selecting Thomas County as one of only 17 that had this opportunity for the matching challenge grant," she said.

In addition to Black, other board members include Richard Dickman, vice-president; Cathy Harrison, treasurer; Junelle Hills, secretary; along with Carl Gilbert, Sherrie Tubbs, Jessica Vaughn and Jennifer Woffter.



PATTY DECKER/Free Press Editor

Colby Mayor Warren Hixson (right) congratulated Colby Police Officer Scott Sitton for his part in helping the Thomas County Community Foundation reach its goal during a special meeting held Tuesday at Farmers and Merchants Bank. In addition to Sitton, Hixson also thanked the bank for being the first major contributor to the foundation.

Scott & Blitz 'Dream team' leaving Colby

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council was made aware at its Tuesday night meeting that Colby Police Officer Scott Sitton, who worked with the department for 11 years, is resigning effective Sunday, Jan. 20, 2002.

"He and his K-9, Blitz, were the 'dream team' and what they did for us and the community had a tremendous impact now and in the future," said Colby Police Chief Randy Jones. One thing that Sitton will be remembered for long after he leaves the area, Jones said, was his quick thinking and courage during a traffic stop almost two years ago that resulted in the discovery of more than \$3.75 million in drug money.

With the news of Sitton's resignation, the question of what to do with K-9 Blitz was discussed since the dog is no longer on active duty with the department.

"There are two options," said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, "either we euthanize Blitz or sell him to Scott."

The council unanimously agreed to sell Blitz for \$1 and a bill of sale.

In other council business:

- The annual process of appointing the municipal court judge and city attorney were discussed and ap-



Rick Ress



Joel Kriss

proved. It was decided to re-appoint Rick Ress as the municipal court judge and Joel Kriss as city attorney. The council also agreed to raising each of their salaries by about 4 percent in 2002. For Ress, the increase meant an additional \$100 a month bringing his salary to \$2,127.81 monthly. Kriss received a similar increase, which increased his monthly salary to \$2,163 a month. The judge's clerk was also approved for a raise of \$35 monthly or an increase to \$829.90.

Bob and Shirley Coleman of Colby requested approval of a stem wall that would extend from the new garage they are building to the street. The wall would taper down to the street and follow the contour of the land. The council approved the changes, adding that should the city need to make repairs that would require taking down the

wall, it would be at the Coleman's expense to replace it. The Coleman's agreed and the vote to allow the change was unanimous.

- The city planning commission reviewed the replat submitted by Tuffy and Linda Taylor at their new property, Southwind Plaza addition, that would give a 45-foot street right-of-way on the east and north of the property, formerly Whites Outlet. The council approved the changes.

- The Colby Free Press was designated as the city's official newspaper in 2002.

- Applications for licenses to sell cereal malt beverages were approved for J-J Oil Co., WKR Management (Pizza Hut), Dillons, TGW Management (Colby Corner), S.S. of Kansas (Montana Mike's), Triplet, Inc. (Amoco), Love's Country Stores, The Service Oil Co., and Colby Jaycees.

- Approval was given to lease the Big Chief Hangar at the Colby Municipal Airport to Mark Kendrick.

- Joshua Diaz was granted a home occupation permit for Sublime Essence at 395 W. 2nd, Colby.

- The council also approved holding a special end-of-the-year meeting on Friday, Dec. 28, at 7:45 a.m. and canceled its Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2002 regular meeting.

Rexford step closer to new fire truck

By **MAXINE NELSON**
Colby Free Press

Corina Cox and Michelle Kippes, representing the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission of Hill City, presented final paperwork for a Community Development Block Grant to aid the purchase of a new fire truck for the city of Rexford at Monday's Thomas County Commission meeting. Bill Dible was on hand to represent Rexford. Total cost of the truck is \$94,731, the grant is for \$45,597, and the county will pay \$49,134.

Cox said the \$12,000 from Rural Development had been expected immediately, but will not come until February, due to a misunderstanding about some of the guidelines. However, County Clerk Tracey Perkins said the money needed to be paid immediately because the county cannot go into the red for that line item until February.

Dible said the city of Rexford has a CD worth \$12,000 with \$200 interest, but the penalty would be \$198 if it was cashed in. Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock said that would be the proper thing to do.

The commissioners signed the papers to close out the grant.

In other business:

- Dale Deaver and Duane Tubbs, East Hale Township trustees, discussed township finances. The township voted to turn maintenance of the township roads over to the county a couple of years ago, and both trustees agreed they were happy with the results. "It's better than what we had,"

said Tubbs. "We're pleased," said Deaver.

The trustees and the commissioners want to know how finances are going. The county has spent about \$26,000 on road maintenance, and the township has about \$22,000 in its budget. East Hale Township raises about \$6,000 in taxes each year.

Kersenbrock asked if Barrett Township had ever paid for its half of the utility bills and upkeep of the building and park they share in Levant. Kersenbrock reminded them of the agreement between the two townships and gave Deaver a copy. Deaver said he would find out how much the utilities were and meet with the trustees of Barrett Township.

He said East Hale township had spent \$700 for insurance on trustees so they could not be sued individually, and had done about \$1,200 of concrete work in the park. Next year they plan to have some lawn work done there.

Chris Bieker, road supervisor, said they would have to amend the budget in order for his department to be able to spend it. He wants to get finances straight before the end of the year.

- Dible said the Rexford Fire Department has bought a crash truck from the Denver Airport. It transports water to fires, fast. He would like to sell it. Ron Evans, commission chair, told him to check with the cities in the county, and to advertise in a trade magazine.

- The commissioners signed a resolution providing for no-fund warrants to pay the expenses of the new cell at the Thomas County Solid Waste Dis-

posal Facility in the amount of \$700,000 to be retired in not to exceed five years with a tax levy which would include interest to retire the warrants. The resolution will go before the State Board of Tax Appeals in Topeka.

- Josh Buffington, director, and Martin Rinehart, assistant director of Thomas County EMS, brought their report. Rinehart said up to Dec. 14, the department had made 557 runs compared to 604 last year. He said bills of \$115,343 were out, and \$104,483 had been collected. They are being reimbursed at \$187.58 a run, which costs about \$204. A billing agency sends out the bills.

Buffington said calls were down because of the good weather. He said they are going to start doing ground transport with certified hospital nurses to accompany the patient in the ambulance, rather than waiting for an airplane. The nurses will have the same training as the flight crew.

He said he had made arrangements with the State of Kansas Set Off Program to collect outstanding dues from state refunds, such as taxes.

He is going to switch to the American Heart Association program to teach CPR instead of the American Red Cross. The same people will give the classes. Buffington said he was just finishing up his paramedic classes.

- Undersheriff Mike Baughn asked if there were any requirements that county personnel live in the county. The commissioners said there are not. "Get the best qualified, regardless of where they live," said Evans.

Search continues for al-Qaida members, bin Laden in Tora Bora area

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP)—The search continued today for remaining al-Qaida members or clues to the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden, in and around Tora Bora. Meanwhile, U.S. helicopters ran night missions through the mountain valleys, while Afghan fighters brought more prisoners and documents from a sweep of

snow-laden cave hide-outs.

The tribal eastern alliance, which led the assault on Tora Bora, rebuked two of its leaders for allegedly conniving to allow hundreds of al-Qaida members—including some top commanders—to flee into Pakistan, an alliance official said.

Pakistani journalists in Parachinar,

near where the revolt took place, said the rebelling prisoners were among 156 al-Qaida members arrested in small groups Tuesday as they fled Tora Bora. Pakistan has poured helicopters and thousands of soldiers into the tribal areas along the border and set up 300 checkpoints to cut off escape routes from the Tora Bora area. Pakistan ear-

lier said it had arrested at least 108 fighters fleeing Tora Bora, including at least 60 Arabs and other non-Afghans.

Near Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, Afghan forces closed the road toward the Pakistan border, claiming there had been fighting between tribal gunmen. But the provincial intelligence chief, Haji Gulalai, denied the

report. "Everything is under our control," he told The Associated Press.

International forces were preparing to take positions in Kabul in time for the inauguration Saturday of a six-month interim government. Military advisers from 17 countries that have offered to contribute peacekeepers were meeting in London to nail down

details. The U.N. Security Council was poised to approve the force, possibly by Thursday, after key council members agreed the troops would be authorized to use military force if necessary. A vanguard of 200 British soldiers could move from Bagram airport to Kabul, at the head of a force that could grow to number 3,000 to 5,000.

Briefly

Weather: Snow anticipated

The National Weather Service continues to use the word "snow" in its forecast for the Colby region as we move toward the weekend. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows in the teens and southwest winds 5-10 mph. Thursday, partly sunny, highs in the mid-50s and south winds 5-10 mph. Thursday night, clear and lows in the upper 20s. Friday, increasing cloud cover, highs in the upper 50s, thunderstorms likely, then light rain changing to light snow as the temperature drops into the 20s after sundown. Friday night late and Saturday, snow chances continue, lows dropping into the teens and highs around 25-30. Saturday night and Sunday, cloudy with light snow early, then becoming partly cloudy with lows around 20 and highs in the mid-30s. Colby's high Tuesday was 48 and the overnight low this morning was 11. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 36 degrees. Precipitation for the month remains at only 0.07

inches. The records for Dec. 19: 71 in 1979 and -18 in 1989. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

School dismisses early Friday

Colby Public Schools will dismiss at 1:30 p.m., Friday for the holiday break, said Superintendent Kirk Nielsen. Busses will run accordingly with school resuming for students and staff on Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2002.

Landfill closings announced

The Thomas County landfill will be closed Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 24 and 25, for the Christmas holiday. Landfill information number is 462-8139. The landfill will be closed Tuesday, Jan. 1, for the New Year's Day holiday, said Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor.

Courthouse to shut down

The Thomas County Courthouse will be closed Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 24 and 25, for the Christmas holiday, and Tuesday, Jan. 1, for the New Year's Day holiday, said Tracey Perkins, Thomas County Clerk.

Most places will close down

Chances are that business places you would generally frequent on any given Tuesday of any given week, won't be open come next Tuesday — Christmas Day. And joining the closures will be your Colby Free Press. But we and they will be back on a regular basis Wednesday, Dec. 26.

Brewster trash pickup changes

Officials at the City of Brewster sanitation department said the dates for normal trash collection will be moved back

one day to give city employees holiday time with their families. Normal trash pick up on Tuesday, Dec. 25, will be changed to Wednesday, Dec. 26 and Tuesday, Jan. 1, will be moved to Wednesday, Jan. 2.

Turn holiday lights on early tonight

Residents at Prairie Senior Living Complex will be touring the city tonight beginning at 6:30 p.m. to view Christmas light displays. Organizers of the tour are encouraging everyone to turn lights on early so that residents will be able to see all the lights of Christmas throughout town.

Sweet Thunder offers services

The Colby Girls Fast Pitch Association "Sweet Thunder" is offering babysitting and gift wrapping services in the basement of the Sports Shoppe, 400 N. Franklin. The hours on Saturday are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 5 p.m.

