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Better late than never



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

For people at the Senior Progress Center of Thomas County, the joys of unwrapping Christmas gifts came a day late, said Deb Koon, director. "There just wasn't enough time or people around before the holidays to open presents," she said Wednesday morning, "so we waited until today." In previous years, senior citizens would exchange gifts with one another, Koon said, but this time it was decided to buy gifts strictly for the center. From left to right: Koon assisted in maneuvering

opened presents as Millie Savain, Milton Thomas and Wanda Thomas (seated) were busy unwrapping. Standing is Ed Dean opening a gift of paper towels. In lieu of the gift exchange, Koon said, that on behalf of the center she was pleased to see so many gifts of paper plates, napkins, toilet paper, paper towels, oven mitts, kitchen utensils and other needed items that will benefit everyone who attends center activities.

Fair board gets unexpected gift

By MAXINE NELSON
Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Fair Board will have an additional \$7,500 for use in next year's fair premiums thanks to funds provided by the county's drug forfeiture committee. The announcement was made recently by Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones during a regular meeting of the board.

"We are very appreciative of Tom Jones," said Mark Miller, fair board president. "This gets the funding back to the kids. We are very excited about them helping us out on that; it will go to a good use, touch a lot of people. We spend almost \$7,000 last year (for premiums) and that is not including all the labor to get all those together."

In other business:
• The board voted to shorten the fair week by one day. Instead of Monday through Saturday, the 2002 fair will be Tuesday, July 30, through Saturday, Aug. 3. The board decided to eliminate Monday night rodeo, and push everything back a night. Tuesday and Wednesday nights will be rodeo; Thursday, Demolition Derby; Friday and Saturday, car races.

Miller said Monday was always difficult because the 4-H kids are still busy setting up for the fair. The change in the length of the fair was made in hopes of streamlining things.

While plans for the 2002 fair are still evolving, Miller noted that somewhere during the week the board wants to promote Genesis.

"Maybe we can do this by offering a discount on tickets, or maybe by asking people to bring a can of food for the free barbecue. We want to support Genesis and give back to the community," said Miller.

He said the board is toying with the idea of moving the parade to Saturday. "We can always change it back if it doesn't work," he said. The theme of the parade is *Journey Into Imagination*.

• Larry Koon reported the Colby Lions Club would like to put on the 2002 Demolition Derby.

• Fair book changes as recommended by the Thomas County Program Development Committee were reviewed.

• Gary Garrett, rodeo chairman, reported the Rumford Rodeo Company will provide two evenings of rodeo. The announcer and sound man have also been confirmed.

• Marty Crampton presented a proposal for the 2002 fair races which was reviewed and approved by the board. There will be two evenings of races. Friday night's race will feature late models, bombers and cruisers. Saturday night will feature modifieds and super stocks.

North Platte, Neb., has agreed to run their modifieds and super stocks on Friday evening in order to allow drivers to compete at both locations. Racing on different nights should also entice more drivers to the area to race.

• Election of officers will be held at the Jan. 10 meeting.

Democrats hoping for coalition with rural GOP on redistricting

TOPEKA (AP) — Democrats have been trying in recent weeks to sound like champions of rural Kansas, even though small towns and the farmers who live outside them often vote Republican.

That's because the minority party has a lot at stake in next year's debate over legislative redistricting. Republicans occupy their best position in decades for redrawing political maps to make it more difficult for Democrats

to win seats in the House and Senate.

Democrats are responding to their relative lack of power by trying to forge a coalition with Republicans who worry about a loss of political clout for rural areas.

The pitch is simple: Work with Democrats, and they'll prevent rural communities from losing representation, despite the results of the 2000 census. It's a natural enough strategy for a party that holds only 10 of 40 Sen-

ate seats and 46 of 125 House seats.

"I believe a coalition can be formed," said Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka. "I'm not precluding anything."

The state must redraw its legislative districts every 10 years to account for shifts in population. Since a 1962 U.S. Supreme Court decision, those districts are to be as equal in population as possible, so that all Kansans are equally represented in the Legislature.

But legislators still have a great deal of discretion in how to draw boundaries, and politics are a factor.

For the first redistricting since the 1960s, Republicans hold large majorities in both houses and the governor's office. Ten years ago, Democrats held a 63-62 majority in the House and Democrat Joan Finney was governor.

This year, Democrats have complained repeatedly of being left out of deliberations on redistricting. Repub-

licans insist they're being fair, but no one — not even publicly indignant Democrats — expect the GOP to be impartial in drawing new districts.

"It is naive to believe the party in power will surrender that power," said David Adkins, R-Leawood, chairman of the Senate Redistricting Committee. "It would violate the laws of political physics."

A Special Committee on Redistricting has endorsed proposals for redrawing House and Senate districts

drafted by Republicans. That was not surprising, given that 23 of the committee's 34 members are Republicans.

The House proposal would create five districts with two Democratic incumbents each. Democrats have complained loudly about how the map treats Democratic strongholds in Hays and southeast Kansas.

But the complaints are louder about the GOP plan for redrawing Senate districts.

Christmas goes to Ground Zero as efforts continue amid wreckage

NEW YORK (AP) — The search for bodies in the World Trade Center wreckage stopped only briefly for Christmas services, then continued, with the crews determined to help console grieving families by bringing home the missing.

"In a weird way, it would be like a gift for somebody," said emergency services police officer Patrick Shea, who spent the holiday sifting through the debris.

Christmas Day marked 15 weeks since Sept. 11, when two hijacked jetliners crashed into the trade center towers and left nearly 3,000 people dead or missing.

The remains of several victims were found Christmas Eve as crews reached what had been the underground levels of the trade center.

The rescue workers at the site Christmas Eve and Christmas Day had volunteered to be there. Many said their families missed them on Christmas, but they noted that it was nothing like what victims' relatives were going through.

"If you have to work on Christmas, as far as a fireman is concerned, this is the place to be," said New York firefighter Tom Sweetman.

Huge crowds of locals and tourists also gathered at the site to pay their

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New York firefighter

respects. Veronique Fellous, who traveled from Paris to celebrate the holiday in New York, said she wanted to be there to feel like part of the community.

Army National Guard Sgt. Enrique Guadalupe spent the day escorting dozens of victims' families to a viewing platform at the site. He said it was an honor to be working at the site on Christmas.

"They go in one way, and when they come out, they have a whole different expression," he said. "I guess they feel some sort of closure."

Workers gathered inside a giant tent on the site throughout the day, where Salvation Army volunteers served a Christmas meal of prime rib, turkey and ham.

Christmas was also a working holiday for many National Guardsmen across the country who patrolled airports, bridges and other potential ter-

rorist targets.

"It's been a pretty upbeat day, considering," said Los Angeles firefighter and guardsman Steven Monteilh, who was patrolling the Burbank Airport outside Los Angeles.

"People are in a festive mood. They're less stressful, less in a rush, less snappy."

"I think that's the holiday that brings that out in people."

President Bush said in his Christmas message that Americans across the country were thinking of the families who lost loved ones, both in the Sept. 11 attacks and on the battlefield in Afghanistan.

"This is a day on which we give thanks for the wonder of God's love, for the blessings we have received, and for the families we love," Bush said. "And this year all of these things seem particularly important."

Preparing for storytime



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Rosa Lee Waterman, children's librarian and circulation clerk at Pioneer Memorial Library, pondered over which books she will be reading during children's storytime that will begin again in January. "We have four different groups with family night at 7 p.m., Tuesdays; toddler time at 10:15 a.m., Wednesdays; and preschoolers on Thursdays at 10:15 a.m. and 1:15 p.m.," she said. Enrollment is underway and openings are still available in most cases, except with the exception of the morning preschool group, which has already filled up, Waterman said. This next group of children's storytime meetings will continue through the week of May 20, 2002.

Briefly

Weather: Light snow likely

The Colby region's weather will be pretty much on the cool side for the next couple of days, says the National Weather Service. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows near 20 and northwest winds 5-15 mph. Thursday, some clouds, highs in the lower 40s and northwest winds 10-20 mph. Thursday night, clear, lows near 15. Friday, cloudy, high in the middle 30s. Friday night and Saturday, cloudy, 30 percent chance for some light snow during the period, lows +10 and highs 25-30. Saturday night and Sunday, cloudy, again

some light snow expected, lows +10 and highs around 25. No Christmas Day temperatures were available today. The records for Dec. 26: 64 in 1971 and -10 in 1894.

(The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Youth rally set in January

Colby Public Schools is hosting a youth rally with the theme, "Directions for the Future," on Thursday, Jan. 3,

2002. More than 600 students will be attending the event from Oakley, Goodland, Tri-Plains, Atwood, Grinnell and Colby, said Joni-Clark Leiker, Colby High School counselor. Seating for some of the sessions will be available to the public at 10:35 a.m. to hear Jason Dorsey, an author and speaker who has appeared on NBC's Today Show and ABC's "The View."

In addition, there will be limited seating for Bill Cordes' presentation at 12:30 p.m. Cordes is known for his speaking and as a consultant and author of many books involv-

ing teenagers. For information, call 465-5300.

Wellness Fair wants merchants

With the annual Wellness Fair nearing, businesses are being asked to take part in promoting community health and wellness by covering the cost of the fair registration and on health screenings for their employees who may want to participate. The fair will be held on Saturday, Jan. 26, 2002, at the student union on the Colby Community College campus. For information call Erickson at (785) 462-3984.

