



# COLBY FREE PRESS

6 pages

## Colby, Thomas County 2001

# A look back at news-making events

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

As the year 2001 draws to a close, there were many events that have affected Colby and Thomas County both in positive and negative ways. During the next few days, the Free Press will be highlighting many of those stories.

During the early part of January, the weather was warm, the U.S. Postal Service raised the rate of a first-class stamp to 34¢ and higher gas prices were felt here and across the nation.

City and county officials were also interviewed to make their best predictions on how the year would stack up. Thomas County Commissioner Glen Kersbrock said he didn't foresee anything "earthshaking" for 2001. He did mention that the county would be taking over the landfill operations from the city and was hopeful that recycling efforts would continue to improve.

For Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, she saw the year as one that would be a "fiscally conservative year."

The city and county's Chamber of Commerce director, Gerry Fulwider predicted that agriculture and interstate traffic would continue to strengthen the economy here, although he was concerned about retail businesses.

"As it becomes more difficult for small businesses to compete with Internet sales and major chain stores, expect to see some stores close," he said as the year 2001 began.

In the school district, Kirk Nielsen, superintendent, set goals for 2001 in completing a district-wide webpage; public access cable channel for the school system; and continuing to promote parent involvement in the schools.

Among people in the news during the first of the year, Thomas County welcomed Josh Buffington and Martin Rinehart as the new emergency medical services director and assistant director, respectively. The first baby of the year in Thomas County was Chandler Welker, the son of Jason and Jennifer Welker, Colby, who was born on Friday, Jan. 5.

Tom Albers, a former Colbyite, was named teacher of the year and referred to by his students as the "math God."

Young people in Colby also started a dialogue with their older counterparts to see if it were feasible to open a teen center. The group, *Youth On Board*, held meetings early in the year to review surveys about what activities and projects might benefit young people here.

The SmartStart Northwest Kansas Project had good news as well with the

news that it had been awarded more than \$270,000 in grant funds for the purpose of improving early childhood care, health and education in 11 counties to include Thomas County.

Another grant challenge was announced in mid-January with the creation of the Thomas County Community Foundation. The challenge was to raise \$300,000 in the county that would be matched by the Kansas Health Foundation, but the catch was it needed to be done before the year ended.

The Thomas County Big Brothers Big Sisters organization received a shot in the arm thanks to a \$35,000 grant from the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund.

Colby Public School introduced a new project that would involve students at all grade levels. The project, known as SPICE, which stood for Songs, People, Inventions, Community/Culture and Events, highlighted the decades of the 20th Century.

In late January, farmers were pleased with the wheat crop following the arrival of snow earlier in the month. Dennis Chandler, Thomas County Extension agent, said the county was fortunate in that its wheat was looking better than many of its neighboring counties.

Fundraising organizations were happy with proceeds from a variety of activities. For example, Pheasants Forever, grossed more than \$30,000 at its 17th annual banquet.

In business news, a proposal for a new truck/fuel stop was discussed at city council by Mike Woofler of Colby, who would be developing that area. In addition, a new visitors center would become a reality in Colby. The center would be built around a donated grain bin with a one-story addition to accommodate visitors.

It was expected that the center would open by summer.

The first major snowstorm of the year came on Saturday, Jan. 13, dumping more than 11 inches of snow.

Along with snowstorms, the first major fire involving the death of a Thomas County resident was on Monday, Feb. 5, when Loring E. Medford, 68, died in the blaze. It was the first fire-related fatality in nearly 20 years. The next residential fire in 2001 would happen the same month on Tuesday, Feb. 27. The late evening fire destroyed a garage at 525 S. Grant and belonging to Brian Brown.

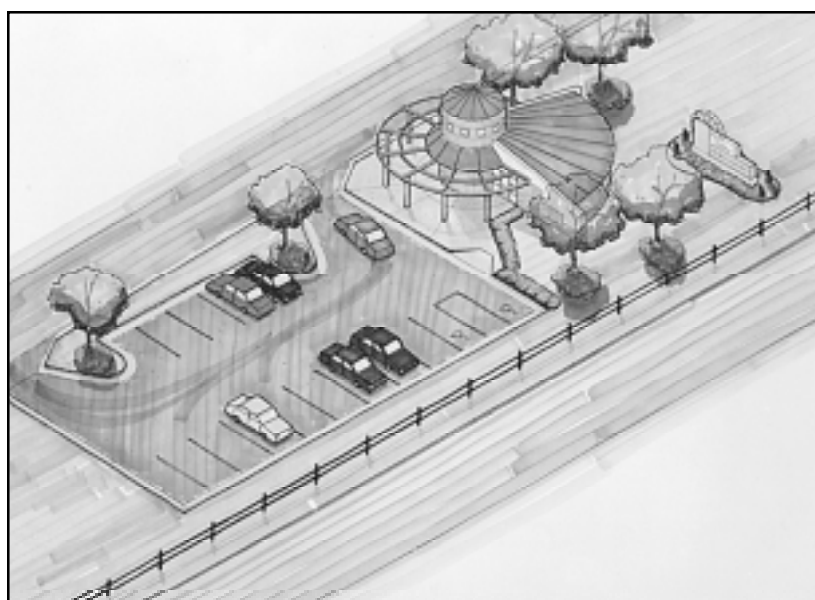
*Editor's note: This is the first in a continuing series on the year in review. More highlights from February and March will appear in Friday's edition.*



Colby Free Press file photos

**ABOVE:** The Colby Fire Department had a busier than usual year with several building fires in town. On Feb. 27 a garage at 525 S. Grant was left in smoking ruins when a snowmobile backfired and caught some combustibles on fire, according to Rick Dickman, Colby assistant fire chief. **BELOW LEFT:** The Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau un-

veiled plans for a new visitors center off Range Ave. near I-70. The facility was expected to be open by summer. **BELOW RIGHT:** Traffic and businesses were shut down when a late January storm came through and dumped several inches of snow and ice on Colby. Crews worked for several days cleaning up after Mother Nature.



## Not just about Afghanistan, U.S. military officials say

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. military officials are making it clear publicly that Afghanistan isn't the only country where American forces are fighting — or planning to fight — terrorist networks.

They won't say where, but other areas known as hide-outs for terrorist Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network include Somalia, Yemen, Sudan and the Chechnya region of Russia.

All are predominantly Muslim, with vast, war-ravaged areas under little or no central government control.

The Afghanistan war's commander, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, gave one of the strongest indications yet about the shadowy aspects of the

U.S. military campaign.

Speaking to The Associated Press Tuesday on the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier, Franks said overt and covert U.S. military operations are "going on in a great many places."

Those operations "are designed to do away with these pockets of terrorism," Franks said without giving details.

"I think General Franks was being vague for an obvious reason," said Army Col. Richard Thomas, spokesman for U.S. Central Command, which Franks heads.

"There's a lot of stuff going on. Some of it you get to report, some of it you don't," Thomas said on Wednesday.

## Hearings set in Goodland drug cases

By TOM BETZ

The Goodland Daily News

GOODLAND — Two preliminary hearings have been set and three first appearances are scheduled for the five people arrested last Thursday on charges of selling drugs within 1,000 feet of a school.

All five defendants bonded out of jail Friday, posting \$10,000 bonds.

Police Chief Ray Smeed said the arrests ended a six-month undercover investigation and officers aren't expecting to arrest anyone else. Officers from the Sherman County Sheriff's Department and the Quad County Drug Task Force helped with the cases.

A news release said officers took search warrants to 1402 Cherry and 508 W. 15th St. on Thursday night and found drugs and money in both homes. Smeed said the arrests were made about 6:30 p.m.

Sybrena A. Malsom, 31, 1402

Cherry Ave., has been charged with 11 drug-related felonies and a preliminary hearing has been set for 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 3. Leslie Beims has been appointed as defense counsel.

Clint L. Gresty, 28, 1402 Cherry Ave., is facing six charges of selling marijuana and a white powder substance believed to be methamphetamine within 1,000 feet of a school. Gresty bonded out after a first appearance and a preliminary hearing is set for 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 3. The court appointed Scott Showalter to represent him.

Tracy Lynn Keller, 19, 608 W. 14th St., is facing four charges and his first appearance is set for 9 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 15. Keller was arrested earlier on Thursday. The warrant said on two occasions Keller had about one ounce of alleged marijuana in a plastic bag, which he sold to a confidential informant for \$100 at 608 W. 14th. The

home is two blocks from Grant Junior High School. Keller reportedly made the sales on July 20 and 30. He is being charged with two counts of sale of a hallucinogenic drug within 1,000 feet of a school, and two counts of possessing drugs without a state drug tax stamp. Anthony L. Garza, 25, 508 W. 15th, is facing 12 charges of possession of marijuana, selling marijuana within 1,000 feet of a school, possession of drug paraphernalia to sell or distribute a controlled substance and no evidence of an official drug tax stamp.

Manuela B. Hernandez, 30, 508 W. 15th, is facing seven charges of aiding and abetting sale of hallucinogenic drug within 1,000 feet of a school.

The warrant for Garza says he sold 29 grams of a substance believed to be marijuana, packaged in a clear plastic bag, to a confidential informant for \$170 on Nov. 1, while at 508 W. 15th, which is approximately 987 feet from

Grant Junior High School.

Another charge says Garza sold a confidential informant about one half ounce of marijuana for \$50 on Nov. 8. On Dec. 18, Garza allegedly sold about half an ounce of a substance believed to be marijuana for \$80 to a confidential informant while at 508 W. 15th. Each of these incidents also include additional charges of possession of an hallucinogenic drug with intent to sell within 1,000 feet of a school and having no official drug tax stamp.

Hernandez is charged with aiding and abetting by allowing Garza to possess and sell a substance believed to be marijuana from her residence at 508 W. 15th, on Nov. 1 and 8.

Gresty is being charged with selling one ounce of a substance believed to be marijuana to a confidential informant for \$100 on Oct. 17, while at 1402 Cherry Ave., which is approximately 448 feet from Goodland High School.

## Briefly

### Weather: Snow scratched

Snow talk has been removed from the Colby area forecast, according to this morning's word from the National Weather Service. Tonight, clear, low around 19 and west winds 10-20 mph. Friday, cloudy, high near 42 and northeast winds 10-20 mph. Friday night, cloudy and lows around 16. Saturday, cloudy, highs around 28. Saturday night and Sunday, cloudy, lows around 10 and highs around 25. Colby's high Wednesday was 50 and the overnight low this morning was 15. Precipitation for the month is a scant 0.09 inches. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is

averaging 31 degrees. The records for Dec. 27: 73 in 1928 and -10 in 1894. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Church hosting 'Captive Free'

Captive Free, a contemporary Christian band that brings a message of hope through music, drama, puppetry and interaction, will be performing at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, and 10:30 a.m. Sunday at Trinity Lutheran Church in Colby. This one of several teams of young adults from Minneapo-

lis-based Youth Encounter which perform in hundreds of churches and other locations. Admission is free. Everyone is welcome.

### Court office to close early

The office of the Clerk of the District Court at the courthouse will close at noon on Monday to do end-of-year book-keeping.

### Treasurer's office closes Monday

The Thomas County Treasurer's office will be closed all

day on Monday, Dec. 31 in order to complete year-end records, said Donita Applebury, treasurer.

### 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

