



COLBY FREE PRESS

Like nothing they've ever seen before Olivers recount experiences at ground zero

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

New York City firefighters, policemen and recovery workers probably won't remember Jim and Molly Oliver of Colby, who as Red Cross volunteers put their own jobs and lives on hold for three weeks to help after the Sept. 11 attack.

Instead, what they will likely remember about the Olivers, along with the countless thousands of other volunteers, is how in a time of national crisis everyone, from every state in the union, pulled together to work side by side in bridging the humanitarian gap with brotherly love.

"It was a lifetime opportunity in volunteerism, and we were glad we could go," said Molly. "It was our country's disaster and we wanted to help in any way we could as representatives of Colby, Kansas and as Americans."

The Olivers, who are experienced emergency response vehicle (ERV) drivers and trained in the area of disaster services human resources, were asked to again use those skills in New York City.

Although they had vast experience and knowledge helping in the aftermath of the Hoisington tornado and again in North Carolina following Hurricane Floyd, they both agreed that what they saw in New York City was like nothing they had ever seen or experienced before.

"This was different than other disasters in that so much support was needed for the volunteers and rescuers," Jim said. "The steel workers, crane operators, firefighters, police, recovery crews were all interacting at ground zero and they all used the Red Cross as their family."

"They worked 16 hour days, traveled home, jumped into bed and were



ABOVE RIGHT: Jim and Molly Oliver looked over a poster that was given to them by the American Red Cross as a "thank you" for helping in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. The picture shows the view from the observation deck

back at the scene the next morning. They didn't spend time with their own families — they spent all their time with the Red Cross, which was their lifeline, their serenity," he said.

A typical day for Jim and Molly started at 5 a.m. One hour later they were catching a Red Cross shuttle bus from their hotel in Queens to Floyd Bennett Field on the east side of Brooklyn.

"Floyd Bennett Field was the old New York City Municipal Airport and in its hangars and offices were where we received our day's assignments, briefings and loaded up the ERV," Jim

said.

The routine was the same every day. When they arrived on the shuttle bus, they met with other Red Cross staffers, checked out their ERV, and drove to one of the hangars that housed boxes and boxes of snacks to be delivered to various locations in and around ground zero.

"Every morning we went to a specific hangar where we loaded 4,000 lbs. of crackers, cookies and other snack food into the ERV. From there, we went to a second warehouse to load bottled water, and at another location, we stocked the ERV with ice, and huge



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

on the World Trade Center prior to the attacks. The photographer, Everen Brown, donated his work as a tribute to unity. **ABOVE LEFT:** Jim Oliver (far right) loaded containers at the old municipal airport in New York City. Others pictured were volunteers as well.

canisters or cambros of coffee and hot water," Molly said.

In all, the entire procedure from the briefing to stocking the ERV took about 45 minutes. Somewhere between 8:30 to 9 a.m., the Olivers would then get on the road for ground zero. "We had to fight traffic the entire way to Manhattan," Jim said. Later, the Olivers said they learned that ERV drivers were in huge demand by the Red Cross — and there was a reason for that.

"Even the more seasoned ERV drivers wouldn't accept this assignment because of the drive to Manhattan," he

said. By the time the Olivers left on Wednesday, Dec. 5, there were 20 emergency response vehicles in body shops and most of the other vehicles assigned to ground zero had one or more dents from maneuvering through the narrow streets of Manhattan. The Red Cross has 270 ERVs in its fleet and, of those, nearly 25 percent were in New York City.

The Olivers said they would get on the freeway, which took them all around the outside edge of Brooklyn and every day Molly would have special "goodie bags" ready to give to many of the security people along the

route.

"There was a lot of security at the toll booths and on the streets," she said. "Whenever we could, we would hand the bags out the ERV window as we made our way to ground zero," she said.

The idea of the "goodie bag" had also originated with Molly, Jim said, and every morning while they were being briefed, she would fill ziplock bags with the treats. One day, he said, while she was busy making up the bags, a couple of other Red Cross vol-

See "OLIVERS," Page 6

City council votes to stay with Blue Cross and Blue Shield

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council gave unanimous approval to stay one more year with Blue Cross and Blue Shield at its meeting Tuesday night. The decision was based on recommendations by a committee reviewing different plans, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

Councilman Herb Sunderman asked if the changes with Blue Cross/Blue Shield would affect the new rates and, in response, Armstrong said the costs would be locked in regardless of any corporate changes.

Coverage rates that will go into effect on Feb. 1, 2002 were \$303.43 for a single member and \$657.22 for a family.

"The final premium increase was 11 percent with the new rates and dental coverage would be \$42.64 for family and \$20.03 for single with the employees paying 100 percent of that cost," she said.

In reviewing the other rates, Armstrong said that in some instances the insurance costs were based on many varying factors and were not necessarily like comparing apples to apples. In addition, because of past experiences with partially self-funded plans, Armstrong said, any

plans that included self-funding were removed from consideration leaving the following proposals for review.

Trustmark Insurance, which offered coverage only to Kansas physicians and subject to medical underwriting on nine employees and spouses. With the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan, employees have the latitude of using physicians in both Kansas and Nebraska, Armstrong said. The rates for Trustmark, before underwriting, were \$280.86 for single; children, \$252.77; employee and spouse, \$365.11; and employee, spouse and children, \$617.88.

Another plan proposed was from Thomas County Insurance with Fortis Benefits Insurance Company. While the benefits were similar to Blue Cross/Blue Shield, she explained, the rates were again subject to change based on existing medical risks in the group. Coverage was quoted, but changeable based on risk factors, as follows: a single employee at \$207.37; employee/spouse, \$499.11; employee, spouse, children, \$631.48

In other council business:

• Larry Berg with Midwest Energy in Colby presented checks to the city in amounts totaling \$13,500. The checks represent capital cred-

its or equity since the city, like any other customer, shares in profits, if there are any each year.

• The council approved a quit claim deed to Sunflower Partners on a tract of land in the area between Ramada Inn and Amoco. The payment for the land and relocation of the water line had been received by Sunflower Partners and only required approval by the council in order for Mayor Warren Hixson to execute the deed.

• An agreement was reached on the cost of preparing the base for Horton Ave. (which would be located on the south side of Comfort Inn) at \$15,000 with Cahoj Earthmoving contracted to do the work. The contract agreement stipulated that Cahoj would do the subgrade modifications at that location and Armstrong recommended approval since the estimates were under what the city's engineers had anticipated. The council agreed and approved the action unanimously.

• A great deal of time was spent by the planning commission in reviewing the zoning regulations for C-1, which is solely a commercial district, and C-2, which is a neighborhood commercial district at Southwind Plaza. The commission, Armstrong said, reported they had

concerns about a C-1 zoning which would require no on-site parking, no building set-backs and would limit the types of businesses that Tuffy and Linda Taylor, owners of Southwind Plaza, could have in that area. The commission also considered a C-M zoning, which would be a commercial/mixed use district, but after weighing the three options, recommended keeping the area a C-2 zoning. Along with that recommendation, Armstrong said, the planning commission further recommended that the council consider providing a one time only exception for the building encroachment on the east, and allow for parking and two signs on the city's right-of-way until future development would require a change.

Armstrong said she concurred with the planning commission's recommendations, adding that it would also provide more latitude for the Taylors and be more compatible with the type of development they are building.

In addition, the council was further asked to refund the \$150 the Taylors paid for the rezoning process should they approve staying with the C-2 zoning. Council agreed and approved all aspects of the zoning to include the exceptions and refund.

• The council approved IKON's bid of \$5,240 for a Ricoh 1035 copier as replacement for the current copier in the city manager's office. Proposals were also received from Tri-Central Office Supply on a Savin 2535 at \$5,673 and Office Works for a Ricoh 1035 at \$5,489. Council President Eugene Wieland excused himself from the discussion and approval of copier due to his association with Office Works.

Prior to approval, Armstrong said that when bids were reviewed, she learned that IKON is an authorized dealer for Ricoh, but does not have the territory in Thomas County. After contacting the dealer/sales manager for Ricoh in the central region, the company said they would provide a special incentive to Office Works to enable them to sell the copier at the same price as the IKON bid. The maintenance agreement from Office Works was .0099¢ per copy and IKON was .0105¢ and based on 70,000 copies per year would have been a \$42 difference.

Both Office Works and IKON have certified technicians to service the machine.

After discussing the matter briefly, the council went with the low bid by IKON. The money to pay for the copier was encumbered from the 2001 budget for replacement of the copier.

Briefly

Weather: Chilly

The chilly conditions currently visiting the Colby region will continue for the foreseeable future, says the National Weather Service forecast center at Goodland. Tonight, very cold with lows landing somewhere between 10 and 15 degrees and southwest winds 5-15 mph. Thursday, partly sunny with highs around 40 and southwest winds up to 15 mph, switching to the northwest. Thursday night, partly cloudy and lows again around 15 degrees. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, cloudy to partly cloudy, lows in the middle teens to around 20 and highs in the upper 20s to the middle 30s. Tuesday's high in Colby was 33 and the overnight low this morning was 11. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 32 degrees. Precipitation for month is almost a no-show with a mere 0.10 inches recorded. The records for Jan. 16: 72 in 1894 and —15 in 1930. *(The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

Clarification made on accident

In the Monday edition of the Colby Free Press, we had indicated in a cutline that 29-year-old Robert Kraft had been formally charged with driving under the influence of drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of a prescription depressant. No charges had been filed for those infractions at that time. However, Colby Police Chief Randall Jones said today that these charges were going to be recommended to Allan Taylor, Thomas County attorney,

and it would be his decision whether or not to formally charge Kraft. Regarding 16-year-old Aaron Kraft, who was a passenger in the vehicle, Jones added that no charges were filed, but that a full report would be forwarded to Taylor later this week. It would then be Taylor's decision whether or not to pursue any formal charges based on events that occurred following the accident at the law enforcement center. The *Colby Free Press* wants to maintain an accurate record of our town. Please report any error or lack of clarity in a news story to us at 462-3963.

Wellness Fair set for Jan. 26

Those who had blood work done for this year's Wellness Fair will receive an explanation of the findings at the event on Saturday, Jan. 26, during presentations scheduled for 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 12:30 p.m. The fair will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and is being held in the student union at Colby Community College.

Pheasants Forever sets banquet

Pheasants Forever will hold its annual banquet on Friday, Jan. 25, at the Comfort Inn Convention Center in Colby. Social Hour will be 7-7:30 p.m. with the dinner at 7:30 p.m. The auction, drawings and raffles will follow. Paid registrations received by Jan. 18 will be eligible for an early bird drawing. Membership is \$25. Dinner tickets are \$15 each. Return to Kansas Pioneer Chapter Pheasants Forever, PO Box 205, Colby. For information call Mike at 462-3391.

Landfill director brings questions to county commissioners' meeting

By **MAXINE NELSON**

Colby Free Press

Thomas County landfill director Larry Jumper brought questions to the county commissioners about his budget for 2002 at their Monday meeting. Jumper said the amount was the same as had been agreed to when he talked with the commissioners earlier, but the amounts were different in certain line items.

He said he had "money for what I don't need, and not for what I do need." His big concern was that the capital outlay, which is used for purchasing equipment, was smaller.

Commissioner Chair Ron Evans said the landfill had money allocated for a motor grader which is needed, and the county has some equipment which can be used in case of emergency, and arrangements can probably be made with the city also to use some of their equipment.

He said 2002 will be the last year for the payment on the land which is being purchased for the new cell.

Evans said as soon as the county gets all the dirt which it has purchased to be used as cover in the landfill removed from the property south of the landfill, those payments will cease, too.

He suggested Jumper talk with Jerry Bieker, public works director for the city of Colby, and work out some satisfactory agreement for emergency use of equipment.

Jumper said he had hoped to get a mower tractor, and Evans suggested getting a used mower deck which could be used with the tractor at the landfill. Evans also said Jumper could transfer money from one line item to another.

Jumper said he was thinking of buying a used trash truck with a compactor and keeping it at the landfill office. Private citizens could dump their trash in the dumpsters kept there, and then

the trash could be compacted and landfill employees would take it to the pit, rather than the private citizens, he said. Jumper said he would talk with the city to see if they were replacing a trash truck, and/or check with other entities.

Jumper also said he needed to upgrade the computer at the landfill. There is a lot of dust out there, and the computer is in poor shape, and old enough that it cannot download the latest version of the landfill software, he said.

Evans asked him to check with Mike Albers, technology supervisor for the city, and to let the commissioners know what is needed.

Also, Evans said, he should check with the sheriff's office, and see if any of the computers which have been replaced are suitable for the landfill.

The commissioners will next meet on Monday at 9 a.m. in the commissioners room of the courthouse.

