



# COLBY FREE PRESS

12 pages

‘Let’s go get ‘em . . .

## Rail America now owns Kyle Railroad

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Rail America, based in Boca Raton, Fla., became the new owner of the Kyle Railroad, which has its main office in Phillipsburg, with the change effective Jan. 1.

The new company will continue to serve Colby and northwest Kansas, executing a lease-purchase agreement with the Midstates Port Authority, said Warren Reid of Brewster, who is the Thomas County representative for the port authority.

For those unfamiliar with the railroad lines, Reid — who has served on the port authority for 15 years — explained that Kyle Railroad is the old Rock Island line, and runs from Frankfort (Kan.) on the east, through Rexford, Gem, Colby, Levant and Brewster in Thomas County, and on through Goodland and Kanorado and then to Limon, Colo. This railroad’s tracks are on the north end of Colby.

Two railroad lines serve Colby, Reid said. The other is the Union Pacific Railroad, which runs south of 2nd Street in Colby, southeast to Oakley where it joins the main east-west line. The Union Pacific and Kyle lines connect here, so rail business can move from one to another with a switch.

Reid said when the Rock Island Railroad line went into bankruptcy, representatives from the northern part of Kansas met in Phillipsburg in March of 1980 to attempt to save the railroad. The late Huck Boyd, a newspaperman from Phillipsburg, was chairman of the meeting.

The purchase of the Kyle Railroad was to provide transportation for farm products in northwest Kansas. “In the beginning we knew we couldn’t be without a system to haul farm products, especially our wheat, from the area,” Reid said. “This part of the state raises so much wheat and wheat had always been shipped by rail. Most of the milo and corn goes out by truck to feedlots, but the wheat has to go by rail to end up at the proper mills in the United States and areas where it is exported.”

The original railroad purchase price was \$18 million from a government loan, Reid said. The Midstates Port Authority bought the line and is responsible for the loan. “We are the ones who bought and we are paying off the loan with rent payments from the Kyle,” Reid said.

“We have to accept rent payments, pay the loan off, then for \$1 will turn ownership over to what was the Kyle and has now become Rail America,” Reid said. “We will be dealing with just this short line piece, but it is still our responsibility to see that it is run to the satisfaction of the shippers on the line.”

Reid said Rail America will be one of the biggest in North America with purchase of the Kyle. “They have 47 short line railroads, and their intentions, according to them, is to keep the operation for these individual rail properties intact and let them be run by the people who are running them.”

Reid said they intend to keep the same employees. “Generally, the manager and employees will stay in place,” he said.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

... and they did!” The Colby High School Eagles and their coach, Derek Bissitt, rallied prior to the start of the Scott City contest at the Colby Community Building Thursday night. When the smoke cleared, the Eagles had racked up a 68-52 victory and will be back tonight.

## Lawmakers hear pitch for research centers

MANHATTAN (AP)—Disease-resistant crops, a cure for cancer and the production of a supersonic air cruiser are being touted as the possible benefits of an investment of \$100 million or more by the state.

More than 100 legislators listened Thursday as officials from the University of Kansas, Kansas State University and Wichita State University outlined proposals for new research centers on life sciences, food safety and aviation.

The legislators also heard from Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kan., who said the investment would bring more federal dollars to the state.

“We cannot afford to not invest in research capital,” Roberts said. “This is a blue chip investment that will exceed expectations and benefit Kansas.”

University and legislative leaders outlined a proposal to have the state issue more than \$100 million in bonds over five years, starting in 2004. The

new research centers would be required to obtain federal funds to cover operating expenses.

About 75 members of the House and 28 senators rode two Kansas National Guard buses from Topeka to the Kansas State student union for the daylong presentations.

State Board of Regents members and deans of university colleges that would conduct the research also attended. Kansas State’s presentation fo-

cused on the vulnerability of agriculture to sabotage.

“American agriculture is the single most important industry for America in the 21st century,” said President Jon Wefald.

Roberts and other state officials have said that the food safety center could become the focus of the nation’s defense against agroterrorism, such as infestation of infectious disease among livestock.

## Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County needs financial support

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Most charitable and non-profit organizations felt the pinch following events from Sept. 11, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County was no exception, said Tami Grandison, director.

“Largely the funding challenge this agency faces now is not unusual, particularly with what happened on Sept. 11,” she said. “What makes this challenge so critical for us right now is that we are, for the most part, a new agency still establishing ‘roots’ in the community.”

In a brief overview of the organization, Grandison said services started in March of 2000 with a mission to provide a mentoring relationship that matched adults or “bigs” with a child, known as “littles.”

“The program targets high-risk or at-risk children, primarily from single-parent homes,” she said. However, the organization also accepts children from two-parent homes, which may be at a reduced risk, if the school, church or any social services agency refers them. “When we first opened on March 20, 2000,” Grandison said, “the agency received 36 child/youth referrals and

made five matches by Dec. 31 of that same year.”

By the end of the first calendar year in operation, the group had 12 matches between adults and children in Thomas County and, at the beginning of this year, there are 21 active matches and 30 children on the waiting list, she said.

Along with matching children and adults in the community, the organization has also initiated and supervised a “Bigs in Schools” mentoring program.

“In this program,” she said, “a screened volunteer meets with a child at school and tutors the child in school subjects for one hour, once a week.”

There have also been similar programs introduced at Golden Plains and Brewster. The funding sources for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Thomas County include private donations, fund-raising activities and grant sources. The bulk of the agency’s funding is currently coming from fund-raising and grant sources, she said.

“Our primary operating funds are generated through the annual ‘Bowl For Kid’s Sake’ event held each Spring, with the dates this year Saturday and Sunday, March 23 and 24,” Grandison said. Other fund-raising activities have

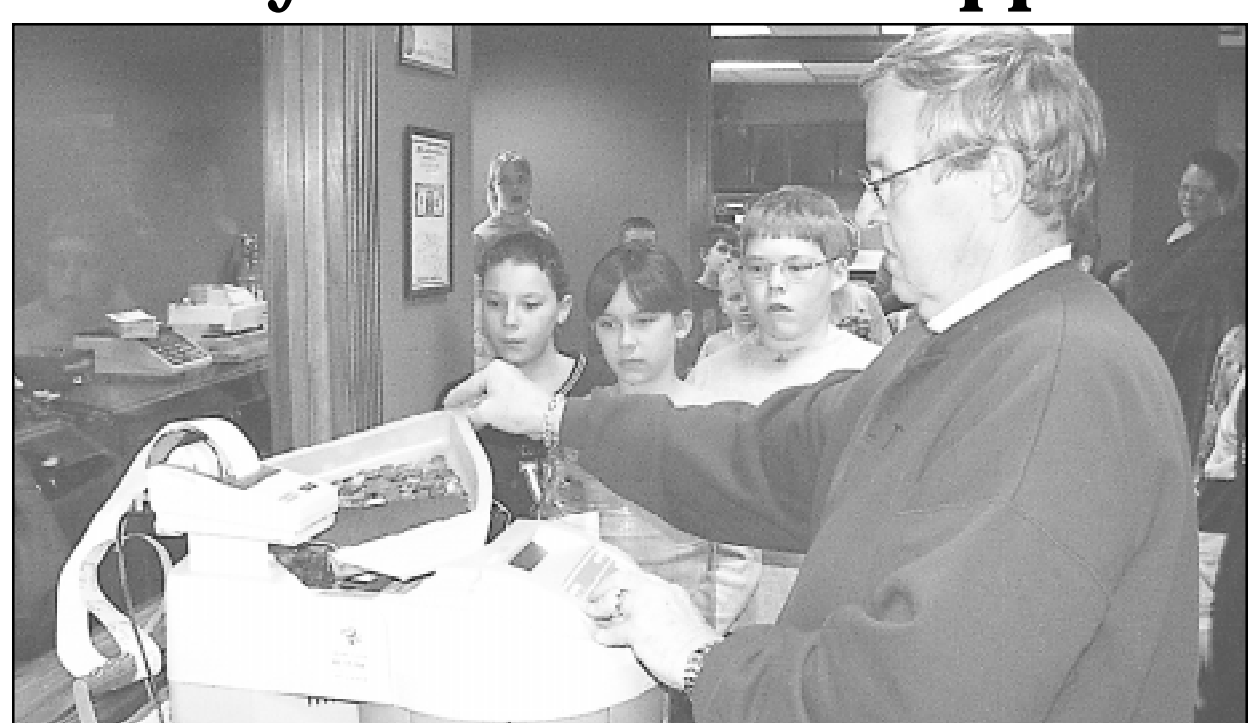
included the sale of fireworks and pancake feeds, which involved the board of directors and staff members.

The Juvenile Justice Authority, drug forfeiture funds and the United Methodist Health Fund Ministries have all contributed to the organization throughout its young existence, she said.

Yet, in many ways, Grandison said that it’s been the community of Thomas County that has overwhelmingly supported the agency. “We currently have 21 active matches and evaluation results have indicated that every child matched with an adult volunteer is making improvement in their self-esteem, academic achievement, school attendance and relationships with peers,” she said.

As the new year continues, Grandison, along with the board of directors, are asking that anyone who can offer help to the organization, whether it’s in the form of monetary contributions or volunteering to match-up with a child or help with an event, they should call.

For information about the agency, Grandison encourages people to call her at (785) 465-9125 or write to the organization at 350 S. Range, Suite 13, Colby, Kan. 67701.



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Donnie Hughes at First National Bank in Colby showed students in Mary Kay Bowen’s fifth grade class how the coin counting machine worked. The reason for the Colby Elementary School visit was prompted following a fund-raising project to help Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County. The students raised \$156 for the organization. Tami Grandison, director of Big Brothers Big Sisters, said she asked one of the student why they chose this agency to collect money. In response, the fifth grade girl said, “Because you help kids. You care about what happens to them and we heard you needed some money. So, we did it.”

## Briefly

### Weather: Moistureless

No precipitation is expected through Monday at least, said the National Weather Service in its forecast today. Tonight, mostly clear, lows in the mid-teens and northwest winds up to 10 mph. Saturday, sunny, highs in the upper 30s, and west winds 5-15 mph. Saturday night, partly cloudy with lows near 10. Sunday, partly sunny, highs in the middle 30s. And Monday, partly cloudy, lows in the teens and highs in the middle 40s. Colby’s high Thursday was 41 and the overnight low this morning was 5. Precipitation remains at 0.10 inches for the month. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 32 degrees. The records for Jan. 18: 73 in 1920 and —23 in 1984. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### College board meets Tuesday

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will meet at 5 p.m. Tuesday in the board room of the Administration Building. Agenda items include payment of claims, discussion of negotiations, and any other item any member wants to discuss. The meeting is open to the public.

### Commissioners to meet Monday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Monday in the commissioners room of the courthouse. Ken Ptacek, noxious week supervisor, will bring an agreement with the state for approval at 9 a.m. Assistant Register of Deeds Maybelle Moore is on the agenda for 9:30. Pat Mallory with S&T Telephone will meet with the commissioners at 10. Josh Buffington will bring an EMS update at 10:30.

### Some closed, some not on Monday

All federal and state agencies will be closed on Monday in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day — a federal holiday. In addition to the state and federal offices, no banks will be open, either. However, employees with the City of Colby and Thomas County will be working, as will most other private business. The Colby Free Press will also be publishing that day.

### ‘Early bird’ deadline ends today

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 today will be eligible for an early bird drawing for a Pheasants

Forever jacket ordered to their size. Membership is \$25. Dinner tickets are \$15 each. Return to Kansas Pioneer Chapter Pheasants Forever, PO Box 205, Colby. For more information call Mike at 462-3391, days, or 462-8806, evenings; or Daryl, 462-3704, evenings.

### Water meeting planned here

Colby Community College will be the site for a meeting on the final report of the Kansas Water Authority’s fiscal year draft of the 2004 state water plan. The meeting is set for Thursday, March 14, at 4 p.m. “This is but the first step in ultimately determining if any or all of these ideas will survive the next year’s scrutiny and formally end up in the state water plan,” said Wayne Bossert, Groundwater Management District No. 4 manager.

“The next step, and perhaps the most important, are the public hearings. Each basin plan is different, so it would be best if you can read the specific plan(s) where you live

and work before attending any hearing or otherwise expressing your views,” Bossert added. For a copy of a specific basin plan, or the entire state water plan, call Bossert at 462-3915.



## Thumbs up!



√ Mary Lou Adrian — enjoy the Free Press, and have a nice weekend.  
√ Jeff Quenzer — and all others involved with putting on this year’s Orange & Black Classic.  
√ David & Dana Green — thanks for joining the growing ranks of Free Press readers.  
√ Joe Calliham — from friends in anticipation of your birthday.  
√ Jim & Molly Oliver — for your fascinating account of Red Cross duty at ground zero.  
√ Classic Visitors — enjoy the tournament, enjoy Colby, the welcome mat is always out.  
(Call TD at 462-3963 to submit a name or group for inclusion in this weekly salute.)

