



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Albers first to complete certification

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

One Colby man has recently completed an emergency communication course that no one else in the state has done.

Mike Albers, who is the technology director for the City of Colby, recently completed a "Level III" certification of the Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Course as part of a continuing education program through the national association for Amateur Radio (AARL).

"What this means for Colby," said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, "is that because of Mike's knowledge in this field, such as ham radio, computers and other types of communication, he is an asset to the city."

In addition to being an important employee with the city, Armstrong said that Albers is also qualified as a weather spotter, which is important to Thomas County as well.

Passing the Level III course not only makes Albers the first to do so in the state, but it also ranks him as only one of four in the entire Midwest Division for emergency communications, which includes Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa, said Jennifer Hagy, media relations manager in Hartford, Conn. The course material, she said, covered message formatting, interfacing with agencies such as Red Cross, Salvation Army, Federal Emergency Management Agency and more. Other areas included setting up communications in disaster areas and staying safe.

For Albers, this most recent certification is another positive step forward in providing a vital communication link should disaster hit.

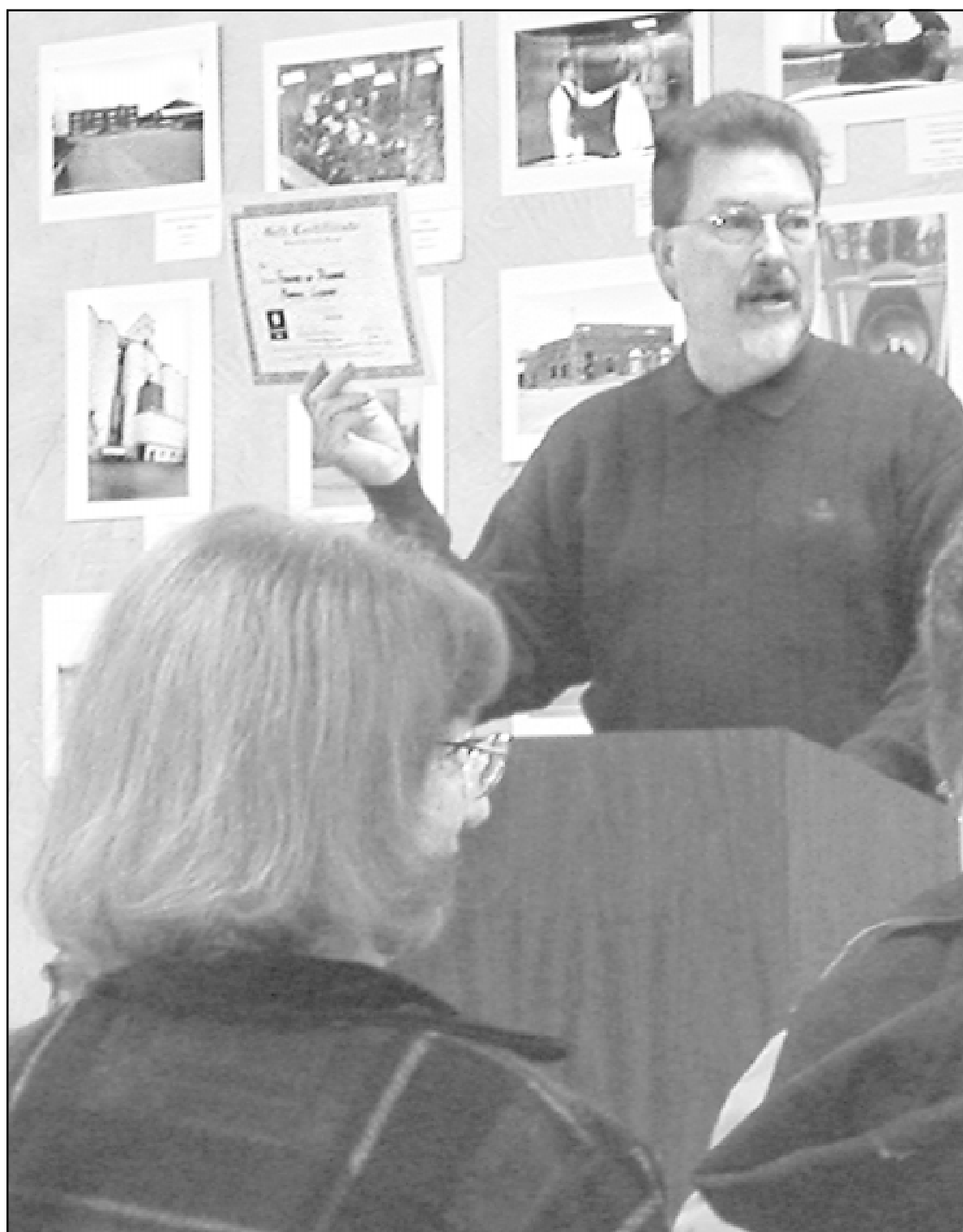
"One reason there hasn't been a lot of interest in western Kansas for amateur radio is because nothing has happened here," he said. "Fortunately, that's good, but as many emergency organizations have said before, 'It's not if a disaster will happen...it's when it will happen,' and that's why we continue to train and stay ready."

There are more than 700,000 radio operators licensed by the Federal Communications Commission with 35,000 of those who will volunteer in emergency services nationwide, if the need arises.

Albers has been a member of the local Trojan Amateur Radio Club for 12 years and has held every office to include being a past-president. He is currently the emergency officer for the club, and serves as emergency coordinator for District 3A, which includes Decatur, Logan, Gove and Thomas Counties. As a member of the National Association for Amateur Radio, Albers was appointed last year by the national group to be the official emergency state coordinator.

Within the local amateur radio club, there are about 25 members with many being active core members. Those people include Bruce Frahm, Jim Robison, Jim Engel, Kathy and Greg Lindberg, Gary Shull, Gerry Bieker and Jeff Schultz in Colby, along with Allen Neal, Hoxie, and Scott Mentzer, the meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service Office in Goodland. The local club holds regular meetings every Friday at Colby College and would encourage anyone interested in joining the group to stop by or call Albers or any other member.

## Going once . . .



MAXINE NELSON/Colby Free Press

Tom Harrison calls for a bid at the annual Pioneer Memorial Library auction Saturday morning. The auction netted over \$3,400 for the library, said Relda Galli, Friends of the Library treasurer. Close to 100 people attended the auction, with the highest bid being a weekend at a condo in Colorado which brought \$400. The auction was preceded by the Friends of the Library annual meeting. Harrison is the husband of Terrel Harrison, Colby Grade School principal. He and Tom Simpson run T&T Auction in Goodland. Simpson has been the auctioneer for the library for the past few years, but was ill Saturday.

## Commissioners told emergency medical director plans to resign

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners got the unwelcome news that Emergency Medical Services Director Josh Buffington will be resigning as of March 29 to pursue other interests.

Emergency Medical Services Assistant Director Martin Rinehart brought plans for an increase in ambulance service to the Monday morning commissioners meeting.

He proposes to raise the base rate

from \$185 to \$225 for a call. Commission Chair Ron Evans said he thought this was a lot of money to pay for the new First Responder service which is being added.

Rinehart said the money was not for the First Responder, but to make up for insurance payments which are being cut. He said insurance has lowered the base rate and will no longer pay for oxygen, splints, and other such equipment used in the ambulance. Evans told him to bring the numbers and if

warranted, they will approve the increase.

"We want what people of Thomas County can afford," said Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock.

Rinehart asked for a credit card so the ambulance driver can buy fuel for the ambulance on a long transfer trip. He said the department has a Total card, but Total is not open after dark.

The commissioners told him to talk to local banks about getting a Thomas County EMS card.

## Drugstore turtle could be oldest ever

OVERLAND PARK (AP) — Mike Conley was about 8 years old when his parents bought him a 49-cent drugstore turtle.

Forty years later, Tiger could be the world's oldest Red-eared Slider. The record had been 37 years, 9 months and 10 days, said Joseph T. Collins, herpetologist emeritus at the University of Kansas Natural History Museum.

"It's pretty amazing that it's lived that long," Collins said. "I think it's really great that they have the world's

oldest Slider." Conley, now 47, still checks on Tiger when he visits his parents at their suburban Kansas City home. Once about the size of a half dollar, Tiger has grown to measure about 8 inches by 10 inches and now calls a metal washtub home.

"It's really incredible," said Conley, who now lives in Dallas. "I tell people — when it comes up in the conversation — 'Remember those itty-bitty, quarter-size turtles you got at the drugstore? I still have mine.'"

"Their jaws always drop."

Roy and Tena Mae Conley didn't keep the receipt for Tiger, but they remember buying him at a Katz Drug store when their son was around 8.

"Everyone got turtles," said Mike Conley. "They always died, or people would get tired of them and throw them in the lake. This one, we kept."

Nancy Flagg of Olathe said she played with Tiger before her family moved out of the neighborhood in 1964.

## Forfeiture money over \$1.5 million, says Sheriff Jones

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Sheriff Tom Jones told the Thomas County Commissioners at their Monday meeting that his department has \$1,583,616.38 on hand from drug forfeiture money. He said his job has "expanded beyond my wildest imagination" because of drugs and money. They seized 45 pounds of cocaine this week, have 10 people in jail and six will be turned over to federal authorities within a few days.

Jones says he has two part-time deputies whose duties are to work with drugs. One worked 151 days last year and seized 21 pounds of cocaine, 1,201 pounds of marijuana, and \$523,018 in cash during 2001. The other seized \$29,575 in cash, 36 pounds of cocaine, and 325 pounds of marijuana. Between the two, they worked 32 cases, made 47 arrests, and seized 11 vehicles. They are paid through drug seizure funds. Jones said he has the best of computers, radios, etc. from drug money.

Jones said the department is getting ready to "phase out an old dog." K-9 officer Gutz will be sold to his handler, Ken Patton. Commission chair Ron Evans told him to have the county attorney draw up the papers. The new dog, a yellow lab, is being trained and will be certified as a drug-sniffing dog.

The sheriff said he was looking into getting some modular jail cells to be added on to the existing building, but had taken no action so far. He said the feds would like to have an input bay to be used to transfer prisoners from the jail to a federal vehicle in an enclosed area. Such additions are expected to be paid for by drug or grant money, not by the taxpayers.

Jones said restrictions on the use of drug money are being eased, and most requests can be granted if it is for community benefit. The sheriff's department is paying for a new radio for the van for the Senior Progress Center from drug money. Jones said the impound lot for abandoned and seized vehicles has been enlarged due to the large number of vehicles. He will be having a sale of impounded vehicles and other items on March 16.

In other business:

• Emergency Preparedness Director John Lygeros brought an update on moving the Emergency Operation Center to the Thomas County Office Complex from the basement of city hall. The commissioners had talked with him about this a year or so ago, the idea being that the office complex has more space, better parking, and would offer another site if city hall were destroyed.

Lygeros said he had met with Bob McLemore, fire chief, and Mike Albers, technology director for the city. He suggested the center be either in the conference room or in the economic development area. He said a 40-60 K generator would be needed to power the whole building, less the air conditioners. Also needed would be hookups for 50 or so phone lines, for a total cost in the \$35,000 range.

Commissioner Kersenbrock said they didn't want to cut up the conference room. Evans told Lygeros to look into a memorandum of understanding with other government agencies in the building to use their space if needed, and to look for a smaller generator which would not power the whole building. Evans said to scale down plans, but to get started. "We may not be able to do it all this year, but do want to get started," he said.

• The commissioners got back the report on the water in the courthouse which said the water was not contaminated. They decided not to buy water filters as had been requested.

• County Attorney Allan Taylor went into a five minute closed session with the commissioners to discuss pending litigation. No action was taken when the meeting reopened to the public.

• Road Department Supervisor Chris Bieker brought a request for replacing some equipment. He said he wants to replace a pickup now, which is a scheduled purchase, and replace a packer in May, asking for bids in April.

He said bridge inspections are due at the end of May. He is going to take off 22 low water crossings, which leaves 33 bridges to inspect. Penco Engineering of Phillipsburg has done bridge inspections in the past, and Evans said to continue.

Bieker brought a final bill for the asphalt project on the road three miles south of Levant, and said the county still owes the Kansas Department of Transportation \$9,070.39 for its share of the work. Total cost of the project was \$634,865.78 of which \$507,80.14 were federal funds, and \$127,065.64 was county funds.

• Chad Zimmerman of the Northwest Local Environmental Protection Group brought a handbook for the commissioners and for the county attorney.

• The commissioners approved tax abatements totaling \$18,827.50. Sixteen of them had been paid under protest, and had to be refunded. The protests were approved by the state, and the county had no choice but to approve them.

## High school's 'pep bus' still has seats available

There are still seats available on the special Colby High School "Pep Bus" leaving the high school parking lot at 1 p.m., Wednesday, when the Colby Lady Eagle's play Andale in the 4A State Tournament game at the Bicentennial Center in Salina.

"The pep bus is open to students, staff and basketball fans looking for transportation to the state tournament," said Jeff Quenzer, activities director and assistant principal.

"We need a commitment of at least

25 people and there are still seats available," he said. Quenzer is urging people interested in making a reservation, to call the high school at 465-5300 as soon as possible. Students planning to ride the bus will need to get permission slips as well.

Prior to leaving for the state tournament, the school has also planned a pep rally and send-off for the team from 10:20 to 11:05 on Wednesday with high school classes dismissing at 12:45 p.m.

## Briefly

### Weather: Pleasant

Pleasant weather is expected to continue through Friday for the Colby area, says the National Weather Service. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows in the middle 20s, west winds around 10 mph. Wednesday, mostly cloudy, highs in the upper 50s, southwest winds up to 10 mph. Wednesday night, partly cloudy to cloudy, lows in the upper 20s. Thursday, cloudy early, then becoming sunny, highs in the middle 60s. Thursday night, cloudy, lows in the upper 20s, and Friday, partly cloudy, highs in the lower 50s. A slight chance exists for moisture over the weekend, in the form of snow. Colby's high Monday was 52 and the overnight low this morning was 9. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 29. The records for March 5: 83 in 1910 and -9 in 1960. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records

are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### New sanitation truck on agenda

The Colby City Council will meet tonight at 7:30 p.m. in the council chambers of city hall, 585 N. Franklin. Items on the agenda include approval of a resolution to designate time-limited parking on Sundays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 385 W. 3rd St.; review and action on proposals for sanitation truck; and approval of revised purchasing policy. In addition, the council will hear the annual report on Pioneer Memorial Library; consider authorization to execute endowed fund agreements with the Thomas County Community Foundation; and discussion of motor vehicle nuisances.

### 'Walk Kansas' deadline Wednesday

Registrations are still being taken for Walk Kansas, a fitness program targeting Kansans of all ages said D'Ette Scholtz, K-State University Research and Extension agent in Thomas County. Team members can walk together or individually, inside or outside, anytime or anyway that fits their schedule and lifestyle. It is approximately 30 minutes a day or 1.75 miles for five days a week. For information or to enroll, call the Thomas County Extension office at 462-4582 by Wednesday.

### Endowment auction nearing

The Colby Community College Endowment Association will hold its annual party auction on Saturday, March 16 at the Comfort Inn Convention Center in Colby. The auction

will be open for viewing of items at 4:45 p.m., the buffet dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m. with the live auction beginning at 7 p.m. To make a reservation or questions, call (785)-462-4684. All proceeds from the auction will be used to fund scholarships at Colby Community College.

### Free performance in March

"How Things Happen in Three" will be a free performance on Saturday, March 9, at 11 a.m. in the Frahm Theater at the Northwest Cultural Arts Center on the campus of Colby Community College. The event will feature popular fairy tales to include The Three Pigs, The Three Wishes, The Three Bears and The Three Bill Goats Gruff. The performance is sponsored by Kansas State University in conjunction with Colby College.

