



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Rovohl Township residents satisfied with road decision

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

It was good news for people who live on private roads in Rovohl Township when the Thomas County Commissioners told them at Monday's meeting that their roads would be maintained as they are currently being done by the township.

"We're going to do what has been done in the past," said Commissioner Ron Evans to the Rovohl residents in attendance.

"We're going to do our best to make the people in Rovohl Township happy, but when the money runs out, the money runs out."

The turnover of Rovohl Township road maintenance to the county will occur on Jan. 13, 2003, as a result of the Nov. 5 election. Questions were raised as to whether people living on private roads (not on section lines) would still have maintenance done on their roads. Monday's assurance by the commissioners will grant that to be done.

At the commissioners' last meeting on Dec. 2, Chris Bieker, roads supervisor, questioned whether the insurance of the county would still cover them if they were to maintain private roads.

After checking into the matter, it was established that the insurance would cover the county.

"It is silly to think that it (the insurance) wouldn't cover us. It would be like saying someone's car insurance wouldn't cover them on a private

road," said Evans.

In other county business:

- Two tax abatements were approved. One was in the amount of \$12.66 and the other was for \$7.78.
- The November work report was read for the Thomas County Highway Department.
- Larry Jumper, foreman for the landfill, gave the November totals and reports. He said that for the month of November, the landfill averaged 16.58 tons per day of municipal solid waste.

The average for the year is 15.53 tons per day, which is well under the 20 tons per day limit.

The commissioners read a thank-you note from Mike Woofter concerning the new road, Horton Avenue, that runs east and west between the Comfort Inn and what will be the new truck stop.

It was also decided to participate in the Kansas Association of Counties lawsuit on the demand transfer payments.

Evans read a portion out of the *Capitol Highlights* newsletter about the allotment of funds which was written by former Kansas Attorney General Bob Steffan in 1982.

It was unanimously voted to participate in the lawsuit, which according to Evans, "won't cost us anything, but just shows our support."

The next meeting of the commissioners will be Monday at 9 a.m. in the commissioners' room of the courthouse.

Experience Christmas

Church tries new project to aid missions

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby United Methodist Women tried something new this year by introducing "Experience Christmas" instead of the traditional home tours during the holiday season.

Overall, the event was considered a success by organizers, although ticket sales were down slightly from previous years.

"This was a new idea," said Jane Bandy, one of the coordinators, "and sometimes whenever something is new, it's a little more difficult the first time around."

However, the Methodist Women said they weren't disappointed with the turn out and all the proceeds will be going to mission projects.

Highlights from the event included stops at five different locations where visitors could experience the many facets of the holiday

season ranging from art, symbolism and music to past remembrances and Christmas through the eyes of children.

It took a lot of people to make the event happen, said Joyce Hansen, another coordinator, citing more than 200 different pieces of artwork donated from various artists.

Among the art on display at the United Methodist Church during the event were cross-stitch pieces, embroidered scenes, along with water colors and oils contributed by more than 90 individuals.

At the home of Larry and Patsy Arehart, 1740 Lynda, visitors learned the story of the Nativity. One of the nativity scenes available for viewing was from Austria and done in hand-carved wood. A second nativity was a living scene with local children volunteering to portray Joseph and Mary.

Music filled Fairview Estates with mini-recitals taking place on the hour and half hour throughout the three-

hour long event, complete with string and piano players.

For those wanting to step back in time, Jeanne and Harlan Thyfault opened their little yellow house at 765 W. 4th St. to visitors for a chance to experience Christmas from the 1930s. The house was decorated in a manner similar to what a northwest Kansas person might have seen more than 70 years ago, Bandy said.

Other tour locations included Puddle Duck Preschool, giving sightseers the opportunity to enjoy the fun Christmas things that children have done for the holidays.

Symbolism was another highlight of the tour with a variety of poinsettias, greenery, trees and Chrimons adorning the United Methodist Church sanctuary.

Along with wanting to thank the many people who contributed artwork or other items to this year's event, Bandy also thanked the many people touring the locations.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Hollie (left) and Olivia Herbel of Colby took part in Sunday's "Experience Christmas" tour by portraying Joseph and Mary in a live nativity scene at the home of Larry and Patsy Arehart. Along with the Herbel children, Kayla Skiles, Kyle Peterson and Christian and Gabrielle Wilson (not pictured) participated in the Living Nativity earlier that day.

Kansas task force recommends changes in transportation program

TOPEKA (AP) — Facing a mounting budget shortfall, a task force recommended Monday the state make changes in how it pays for its \$13.6 billion transportation program before considering cuts in projects.

Members of the Transportation 2000 task force also told Gov. Bill Graves that sales tax revenue should be diverted to the 10-year program equal to the percentage of sales tax collected on new and used vehicles.

"It is evident from the recent hearings that the citizens of the state of Kansas continue to overwhelmingly support completion of the entire 1999 Comprehensive Transportation Program and strenuously oppose any reduction in funding which would pre-

vent the completion," the task force stated.

Ben Bauman, a spokesman for Graves, said the governor would be reviewing the report over the final weeks of his administration.

"It's certainly a good document to have," Bauman said. "He would hope that the next governor and legislators would use it as much as possible in setting state government down the road."

The findings come less than two weeks after Graves recommended a \$94.6 million loan payment owed to the transportation program not be paid in fiscal 2003. The money was diverted by legislators to shore up the current budget, an effort paired with increases in motor fuels taxes and vehicle regis-

tration fees.

Despite those efforts, the state still faces a budget shortfall. Graves recently cut \$78 million from the \$4.4 billion state budget to help reduce a projected \$310 million deficit. He also canceled \$48 million in aid payments to local governments.

Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius said the transportation program was a vital part of Kansas' economy. Still, she said, maintaining current funding levels will be a challenge. Sebelius has given her economic team the task of reviewing transportation, among other issues.

"Like every critical piece of the Kansas infrastructure, we will have to determine its appropriate priority for re-

sources in these challenging times," Sebelius said.

Graves' task force said it opposed further cuts in revenue transfers from the state general fund to the transportation program, or a reduction in related transfers made to city and county governments.

According to task force and Kansas Department of Transportation figures, without continued transfers of taxes from the state general fund, the transportation program could face a deficit of \$1.3 billion over the next six years.

The transportation department estimates legislators have already taken more than \$291 million from the program between fiscal 2000 and 2003.

If there is a \$1.3 billion deficit, the

task force said, cuts could include the canceling of 26 system enhancement projects not yet released for construction, or the elimination of all major modifications to highways through 2009.

Transportation Department Secretary Dean Carlson, who leaves office in January, said if he were making the cuts, they would be a mix of eliminating system enhancements and major modifications to roads, along with adjustments to other modes of transportation.

Carlson noted testimony from economists who cautioned that trimming the transportation program would mean a loss of jobs at a time when the state needs the economic

stimulus. "They were very persuasive," Carlson said.

The governor appointed the task force in 1998 to lobby for a program of highway, airport, shortline railroad and public transit system improvements. The group disbanded the next year. Graves revived the task force earlier this year.

Carlson said regardless of when the current program ends, Kansas would need a program that either built on current projects or simply maintained existing infrastructure. He added that without a plan, the state would face problems similar to the poor condition of Interstate 70 in Missouri.

"You can't just walk away," he said.

States are preparing for small pox shots

WASHINGTON (AP) — Every state in the nation is preparing to offer the smallpox vaccine to front-line medical workers, ready to begin a massive education and vaccination program once President Bush gives the word.

But an Associated Press survey of states suggests wide variations in how many people they plan to vaccinate and how many hospitals they expect will

participate in this first round of inoculations.

States were supposed to submit their plans for the first stage of smallpox vaccinations by Monday to the federal government. Immunizations will begin after a presidential announcement, expected in coming days, and states have been told that they'll have 30 days to deliver the shots.

The first group to be offered the risky

but effective vaccine will include those most likely to encounter a highly contagious smallpox patient: people on special smallpox response teams, who would investigate suspicious cases, and workers in hospital emergency rooms.

Nationwide, federal officials have said that about a half million people were expected in this first group, but officials said Monday maybe fewer.

Calls bankruptcy 'Chapter 1' of a bright future

CHICAGO (AP) — Even as United Airlines took out newspaper ads proclaiming its first day of bankruptcy as "Chapter 1" of a bright future, the company warned of wrenching changes to come. Analysts also raised the specter of liquidation.

"We're going to have to be leaner, we're going to have to be more focused," CEO Glenn Tilton said after leaving a bankruptcy hearing Monday.

United attorney James Sprayregen said the airline will try to reduce labor

costs and work with unions to make the pain as minimal as possible. But he said the airline faces "profound and agonizing change."

United's filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the sixth largest by any company and the biggest in aviation history, came less than a week after the federal government rejected a plea for financial assistance.

The bleak numbers in United's petition were filed before dawn Monday in bankruptcy Court in Chicago.

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WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

The numbers
Monday's high, 54
Low this morning, 18
Year ago today, 45 & 17
Temperature at 11:15 today, 49
Soil temperature, 35
Records for Dec. 10: 67 in 1957, -17 in 1972

The forecast
Tonight, clear with lows in the middle 20s. Wednesday, sunny and cooler with highs in the upper 40s. Wednesday night, becoming cloudy with a 30 percent chance for light snow and lows in the mid 20s. Thursday, cloudy, another 30 percent chance for a white dusting with highs only in the upper 30s.

Briefly

Largest stockings waiting for youth
The Colby Fire Department is reminding everyone that in less than one week, the "World's Largest Stockings" will be given away to one boy and one girl during the holiday season. For a \$1 donation, anyone can buy a chance at winning the stockings with tickets available at the Colby Fire Department from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, said Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief. For those wanting to see the stockings, there is one at Santa City and also at the fire department, 585 N. Franklin Ave. The drawing will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday at Santa City, he said. For questions, call 462-4454.

Fair board meets Thursday
The Thomas County Fair Board will meet Thursday at the Thomas County 4-H Building at 8 p.m. Kerry Wark, president of the Thomas County Amusement Association is a scheduled guest and the discussion of the contract with the association is on the agenda. The meeting is open to the public.

Sacred Heart programs planned
There will be two separate Christmas music programs at Sacred Heart School in Colby with the first scheduled for Thursday beginning at 7 p.m. involving students in first through fifth grades. The preschool and kindergarten students will hold their program on Tuesday, Dec. 17, also starting at 7 p.m. Both programs will be held in the school's gymnasium.

Genesis needs volunteers
Officials at Thomas County Genesis Food Bank are reminding everyone that food from the bank will be moved to the 4-H Building on Wednesday beginning at 5 p.m., not 4 p.m., as previously reported. The food baskets will be filled on Friday starting at 6 p.m. and volunteers are needed for both the move and filling activities, said Rosalie Seemann, president of Genesis.

Piano recital open to the public
The students of Sharon Kriss will be featured in a Christmas

Piano Recital on Saturday starting at 10 a.m. at the Colby United Methodist Church. Those performing will be: Lauren and Morgan Bell, Cody Brown, Dustin, Samantha, and Nathan Reed, Lacy O'Neal, Michael Tubbs, Brittany Bange, Kelsea and Emily Geschwentner, Katrina Kaus, Skyler Mengel, Kayla Skiles, Ashley Standage, Cameron Baird, Kaitlyn Albers, Katelin Neuenschwander, Abbie and Megan Allen, Joshua Baden, Kevin Lang, Karl Pratt, Tanner Glad, Valarie Higerd, Erika Erickson, Taylor Miller, Andrea Siemsen and Adelle DeGood.

Charter school hearing scheduled
The Colby School District board of education will hold a public hearing at 2 p.m., Monday, Dec. 16 in the board room of the administration building, 210 S. Range. The purpose of the hearing, said Diana Wieland, curriculum director, is to allow the public an opportunity to review the proposed petition to establish a charter school within the confines of the Colby School District. Detailed information will be available at the hearing or by request from the district. For questions, call (785) 465-5000.

