



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Colby School District gets technology grant

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Colby school board got some good news at its meeting Monday.

Diana Wieland, district curriculum director, informed the board the school system is receiving a \$150,000 enhancing education through technology grant from the state.

She also said the state board of education will be approving Colby's charter school request at its March meeting.

She said the grant will be used to benefit fourth and fifth graders in Colby and at Golden Plains in Rexford.

The grant will be used to purchase laptops and install a Polycom two-way video and audio con-

ferencing system in both schools.

Wieland said the bottom line is to improve reading and math skills for the students.

Through learning about the technology and doing projects with Rexford and Selden, she said the students will get a well-rounded experience that will help sharpen their skills.

They applied for the grant in December and Wieland said the Colby/Golden Plains grant was the top-ranking proposal.

"We were pleased about that," she said.

Twenty schools were awarded 10 grants and Wieland said Colby will probably be collaborating with the other schools as well once they get their technology up and running.

She said the money came from the Supplying Technological Engagement Through Projects Program.

The money comes from federal grants that are applied for at the state level.

Wieland also told the board she received information that the state education board discussed the Colby charter school proposal and it met the board's criteria.

She said the board also talked about funding and has bumped up the initial request of \$48,500 for the first year to \$250,000. She said the extra money would allow the district to get equipment and other items needed to get the Thomas County Academy up and running for the 2005-2006 school year.

## Church eyes fairgrounds for revival

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Fair Board didn't have a quorum for more than a half hour at its Thursday meeting but they discussed business before calling the meeting to order when board member Mark Bredemeier showed up.

Requests to use the Thomas County Fairgrounds for different events was one of the items the board dealt with.

Two members of the Atwood Baptist Church and the Colby Future Farmers of America chapter were present to see about getting permission to use the fairgrounds. David Jones and Richard Wallace

of Atwood Baptist Church wanted to know about the possibility of using the fairgrounds for a tent revival in July. Board president Stan Strange said because the fair board didn't have a quorum, the couldn't take any action on the request but said they would deal with it at their March meeting.

Jones said they would like to hold it in Colby because the church has a number of families that drive to Atwood from Colby and Oakley for church. He said the fairgrounds would be a good location for them to have the event.

Strange wanted to know the dates for the revival. Jones said they're considering starting Sunday, July 4

with a patriotic service and fireworks, and running through Friday, July 9. They would like to use the fairgrounds to put up their 40 by 80 foot tent for the revival.

Strange told them to come back to the next meeting. The FFA is going to be using the 4-H building for its slave auction and they wanted to know if the board would waive the \$100 rent on the building. Strange said they would do that, and the FFA will still pay the \$150 deposit. He said they'll get that back if the building's clean after they're done with it. Board secretary Audrey Hines said the board agreed that was something they could do but it wasn't made into a motion.

## In the good 'ol 'summertime'



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Tucker Branum enjoyed the warmer weather Tuesday on the swings at Fike Park. He was at the park with his brother Rex Branum and grandmother Ruth Schieck.

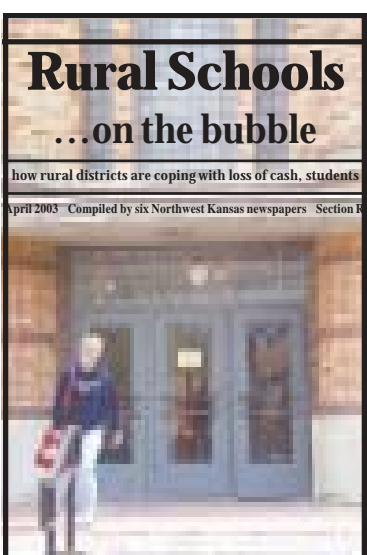
## Free Press, other Nor'West newspapers recognized

The Nor'West Newspapers group, including the *Colby Free Press*, has won the 2004 Burton Marvin Award for News Enterprise from the William Allen White Foundation at the University of Kansas.

The Marvin award is the only statewide news honor given by the foundation and the William Allen White School of Journalism.

The *Free Press* and its sister papers won for their special edition, "Rural Schools ... on the Bubble," last spring.

The 32-page section, produced by the staff of all six Nor'West papers, examined the condition of school districts across northwest Kansas, including enrollment and



Cover of the winning section.

budget trends.

It went into the probability of consolidation down the road, and the impact of the last round of school consolidation on Kansas towns.

"This package of stories represents the newspaper group's dedication to coverage of an issue of overriding public concern, representing a commitment to serve the public and initiative in acting on that commitment," the judge said.

Under the ownership and direction of Steve and Cynthia Haynes, Nor'West includes the *Bird City Times*, *Colby Free Press*, *Goodland Star-News*, *Norton Telegram*, *Oberlin Herald* and *Saint Francis Herald*, ranging in circulation from

489 to 2,160. The total news staff for all six papers is just eight, and all eight were involved in the analysis of rural school districts in 12 northwest Kansas counties.

Cynthia Haynes designed and edited the special section, with help from Mary Lou Olson on proofing, Karla Jones on makeup and Kimberly Brandt, but Mr. Haynes stressed that it was a company-wide effort.

"This award represents a lot of hard work by our staff, from the news department through advertising and the press," said Mr. Haynes.

"They should be proud of this recognition by the White Foundation judges."

The Marvin award is named for

an early dean of the School of Journalism.

It usually goes to a project by a larger newspaper that is considered above and beyond the ordinary run of news coverage, but judges are allowed to split the award if they consider an effort by smaller newspapers to be worthy.

In this case, the judges gave two awards. The other went to *The Wichita Eagle* for a three-year project to reveal crimes by Kansas parolees. The newspaper had to sue to get the information, taking the case to the state Supreme Court under the Open Records Act. It eventually discovered more than two dozen murders by felons supposedly under state supervision.



### Rain, snow

**Colby, Oakley, Hoxie area Tonight...**Partly cloudy in the evening then becoming mostly cloudy. Not as cold. Lows in the upper 30s. South winds 15 to 20 mph shifting to the west 10 to 15 mph after midnight.  
**Thursday...**Mostly cloudy. A 50 percent chance of rain showers in the afternoon. Highs in the mid-to upper-40s. North winds 10 to 15 mph with higher gusts.  
**Thursday night...**Cloudy with rain showers likely in the evening and snow later at night. Windy...Colder. Snow accumulation of 1 to 2 inches. Lows in the mid 20s. North winds 25 to 35 mph. Chance of rain and snow 60 percent.  
**Friday...**Mostly cloudy in the morning then becoming partly cloudy. A 40 percent chance of snow in the early morning. Windy. Highs in the upper 30s. North winds 20 to 30 mph.  
**Friday night...**Partly cloudy in the evening then clearing. Cooler. Lows around 14.

#### The numbers

Tuesday's high, 60  
Low this morning, 26  
Records for Feb. 18, 81 in 1970 and -10 in 1978  
Year ago today, 52 and 24  
February 2004 precipitation, 0.27 inches  
February 2004 snowfall, 6 inches  
Precipitation past 24 hours, 0.00

#### The sources:

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

## County mandated to buy unit

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Replacing the mainframe at the Thomas County Courthouse was one of the items on the agenda at the county commissioners meeting Tuesday.

The commissioners gave county appraiser Mary Cech the go-ahead to get bids for a new IBM AS400.

"The state required it," commissioner Ron Evans said. "They tell us we've got to have it."

Cech explained the unit functions as the server for all of the comput-

ers at the courthouse. It's where all of the data for the departments is stored and the software for the computers runs off the server.

She said upgrading the old unit was looked at as an option until they realized it would be more cost effective to buy a new one. Also, the current system doesn't continuously backup data. If any information is lost, it's unlikely to be retrieved.

Cech said the new unit will have continuous backup.

The last time the system was replaced was in 1998.

In other business, the commissioners voted to pick up the difference in a new insurance plan for two new employees in the county road department, Alan Jones and Ron Hazlette. Bob Harper with AFLAC was at the meeting to discuss a change in the plan.

The new employees will be enrolled in the personal cancer indemnity fund. Everyone will be changed over to the new plan in November or December but Harper said he could have the new employees on in March.

## Briefly

### 'Feed' to fund local group

The Colby Knights of Columbus will sponsor a "Pancake & Sausage Feed" on Saturday from 7 a.m.-2 p.m. in the basement of Sacred Heart Church. Proceeds will benefit the needs and causes of the Thomas County Amusement Association. (Further details in today's "My Turn" column on page 2.)

### Beef Weigh-In Saturday

Beef Weigh-In for 4-H members enrolled in the market steer and yearling bucket calf project will be held on Saturday from 9 a.m. until noon at the Thomas County Fairgrounds, said D'Ette Scholtz, extension agent. In the event of inclement weather, listen for postponement details from KXXX/KQLS, she said.

### First aid, CPR classes start

There will be a first aid class on Thursday beginning at 6 p.m. and an adult, child, infant CPR class on Thursday, Feb.

26 at 6 p.m. Classes will be held at the Red Cross, 350 S. Range in Colby. Call the office at (785) 462-7161 to register.

### Senior/Parent Recognition Night

Senior/Parent Recognition Night for all parents of seniors who participated in boys and girls basketball and pep band will be held Friday. For details, call 460-5003.

### Voter registration open

Voter registration books are now open for anyone who has changed their name, address or who will turn 18 before the next statewide general election.

Visit the county clerk's office to pick up a registration card or call (785) 462-4500 with questions.

### Benefit supper for pre-school

Kappa Upsilon, a local sorority, is sponsoring a soup supper on Friday from 5 to 7:30 p.m., at the Colby Community

Building when Colby takes on Atwood in basketball action. The menu will include chili, chicken noodle, and vegetable soups, along with cinnamon rolls, cookies and drinks. The cost is free-will donation with proceeds going to benefit PuddleDuck Pre-School.

### Pre-enrollment planned next week

Kindergarten pre-enrollment for the 2004-2005 school year will be held at Colby Grade School on Wednesday, Feb. 25 from 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. in the conference room. Call the grade school office at (785) 460-1500 for questions.

### Tax help available

AARP Tax Aide help is now available on Mondays and will continue through April 15 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the meeting room at Pioneer Memorial Library.

On Wednesdays, help will be available on simple tax forms from 1-3 p.m. at the Senior Progress Center. For information, call Alvin Volk at 462-2645 or Lela or Don German at 460-3062.

