



COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

Spreading holiday cheer



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby Grade School fifth graders Brock James, Devon Schlageck and Thomas Jenkins helped load up canned goods Friday donated by children from Head Start up to fifth grade. The food was taken to Genesis of Thomas County. The food drive was sponsored by the grade school Parent/Teacher Organization, as part of the Helping Hand Giving Tree.

Christmas comes early for county

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners got what could almost be considered an early Christmas present at their meeting this morning.

During a brief visit with Gerald DeBoer of Penco Engineering, they found out the county will receive a \$310,000 economic development grant from the state for its Horton Avenue project.

DeBoer said the money won't be allocated until 2006 but that could be sooner possibly if they get finished plans.

The road project, which was discussed at the Dec. 13 commissioners meeting, will involve paving Country Club Drive from where it ends at the I-70 overpass to Horton Avenue.

The commissioners don't know when they will get the money or when their portion of the project will start but the city plans to start paying its part of the avenue next year.

Financing for the county's emergency medical services was also on the agenda.

Director Kathi Wright and Martin Rinehart presented four proposals for financing the new ambulance the county is purchasing.

The lowest proposal was from Bank West at \$90,245 at 3.5 percent over five years, which the commissioners approved.

The ambulance purchase from Midwest Vehicle Professionals in Wichita was approved at the Aug. 31 commissioners meeting.

Another budgetary item discussed was left over money in a county department.

Maybelle Moore, county treasurer, discussed what can be done with almost \$2,000 that will be left over in her budget, which the commissioners approved transferring to the department's capital outlay fund.

They also discussed the treasurer's office's tech fund.

Moore is looking at the purchase of an \$11,000 computer program for her department, and also paying \$2,700 in technical support.

"That program fee is coming out of that tech fund," she said. "It's taken us three years to build it up to \$28,000."

Some of the money was used on a new copy machine and computers, but Moore said she has been frugal with the fund. The commissioners also discussed plans for the next two meetings.

The end-of-year meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 30 with business to include end of year transfers and getting ready for the new year.

The next meeting after that will be the Monday, Jan. 10 meeting where new commissioners Ken Christiansen and Paul Steele, along with the new county clerk Shelly Harms will be sworn in.

In other business, the commissioners approved:

- Appointing commissioner elect Paul Steele to economic development.

- Appointing Kevin Warkas Morgan Township clerk.

Schools close for holidays

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Christmas break starts this week for students and staff at Thomas County Schools, with most not having to return to school until Jan. 3 or 4.

The last day of school this week for the Colby school district is Wednesday with vacation running from Dec. 23-Jan. 3.

Staff has to report back for a work day on Monday, Jan. 3 but students don't come back to school until Tuesday, Jan. 4.

Golden Plains students in Rexford and Selden will enjoy a full two weeks off from school, officials there said.

Their Christmas vacation started today and students will return to school on Monday, Jan. 3.

Students at Sacred Heart get out Tuesday and don't have to report back until Tuesday, Jan. 4.

Christmas vacation for students at Heartland Christian School in Colby starts at noon on Wednesday and students go back to school on Tuesday, Jan. 4.

'Christmas On Us!' big winners named

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Christmas came early for two Colby residents Saturday. They were the big winners in the Colby Free Press/Colby merchants' "Christmas on Us" event held at the Colby Community Building.



Norm Shull



Macen Shull

The \$1,000 winner was Helen Hagler of Colby, whose winning ticket came from Colby Ag Center.

She said she plans to buy something for her home.

The \$300 second place winner was Norman Shull of Colby. He planned to use his money to finish

up his Christmas shopping. Shull's winning ticket came from Dougherty Implement. Shull's son, Macen accompanied his dad.

A total of \$1,550 was given away this year — five \$50 instant winners and the two large prizes awarded on Saturday.

Businesses participating in this year's promotion were China Buffet, Colby Ag Center, Colby True Value, Office Works & Home Furnishings, Stan's Automotive, Beringer Hardware, Dougherty Implement, Great Western Tire, Sundance Spas of Northwest Kansas, Golden Hardware, Colby Implement and Colby Free Press.

RIGHT: Helen Hagler, Colby, the \$1,000 winner in the Colby Free Press/Colby merchants' "Christmas on Us" promotion received her winnings Saturday from Free Press publisher Tom Dreiling. The event, which took place at the Colby Community Building, drew 300 people.



Colby Hoxie Oakley



Cold blast getting closer

Tonight...Partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 20s. North winds 10 to 20 mph shifting to the northwest 5 to 10 mph after midnight. **Tuesday...**Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of snow. Cold. Highs in the mid 30s. Southwest winds around 5 mph shifting to the southeast in the afternoon. **Tuesday night...**Mostly cloudy. Cold. Lows around 11. Northeast winds 5 to 15 mph. **Wednesday...**Mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower 20s. North winds 5 to 15 mph. **Wednesday night...**Cloudy. Lows around 8. **Looking ahead to Christmas Day...**Mostly sunny. Warmer. Highs in the upper 40s.

The numbers
Sunday's high, 46
Low this morning, 18
Year ago today, 65 and 16
Records for this date, 73 in 1894 and -13 in 1924
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
December, 0.00
Snowfall, 0.00
Soil temperature, 34

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.

Colby woman says she has 'guardian angel'

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A Colby woman, who lost almost \$200 in cash, said God must have been working overtime through his "guardian angel" in Oakley.

For Jessie Behrens, it's got to be the only explanation.

The incident happened sometime on Saturday, Dec. 4, she said, either at Santa City or in the parking lot of Dollar General.

"I really don't no where I lost the money," she said. "It could have been anywhere." Yet when she realized the money was missing, she was devastated.

"It made me feel sick," Behrens said, adding that it was her payment for an S&T bill.

Believing that the money was gone for good, Behrens decided not to let it spoil her spirit or the holidays.

"Particularly during this time of year, I figured whoever found it probably would keep it," she said.

Behrens said the money was in a bank envelope, but also enclosed was her paycheck stub and a picture of one of her granddaughters.

"The only thing on my check stub was a first name," she said, "and *The Carousel*."

Then last week, someone called *The Carousel*, where Behrens works as a hairdresser. The person or persons who found the money called to ask if there was a "Jessie" employed there and whether or not

she had lost any money.

After answering, "yes," to both questions, Jessie was shocked when last Friday morning an envelope arrived in the mail with her cash, pictures and paycheck stub all returned.

The only thing missing from the envelope was a return address, Behrens said, as if the sender wanted to remain anonymous.

With tears in her eyes, Behrens said she just wanted to let whoever did this know how grateful she was.

"I just want to say, 'thank you,' to God and my guardian angel.

"Bless you," Behrens said about her anonymous friend, "and have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year."



Jessie Behrens looked at the envelope filled with money returned to her.

Briefly

Senior Center announces holiday closings

The Colby Senior Progress Center will close Wednesday, Dec. 22, at 1 p.m. and remain closed all day on Thursday and Friday in observance of the Christmas holiday. There will be no meals or home delivery on those days and the senior van will not be operating. The center will re-open at its regular times from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday, Dec. 27.

Fish/game licenses now available

The Thomas County Clerk's office said the 2005 fish and game licenses and trout stamps will become available starting Saturday. For questions,

call the clerk's office at 462-4500.

County office close for holiday

All offices in the Thomas County Courthouse will be closed on Thursday and Monday, Dec. 24 and Dec. 27 for the Christmas holiday.

No trash pickup Dec. 24

The City of Colby Sanitation Department will not be operating on Friday, Dec. 2, due to the Christmas holiday. For those with a normal trash day on Friday, it will be picked up on Thursday, Dec. 23, along with the Thursday route. Please have all trash at curbside by 8 a.m.

