



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Super Bowl of special note to Hoxie family

By JAN KATZ ACKERMAN

Colby Free Press

HOXIE—A group of Hoxie residents will be glued to their televisions Sunday during Super Bowl XXXIX as they watch one of their own.

Members of the Melvin Johnson family will be cheering for Philadelphia Eagle Dirk Johnson as his team takes on the New England Patriots.

"I can't find words to describe it. It's wonderful. He finally made it," said Johnson's grandfather, Melvin Johnson, Hoxie.

Dirk Johnson was born in Hoxie on June 1, 1975, the son of Richard Johnson, Pavillion, Wyo., and Lynn (Younkin) Johnson, Montrose, Colo. His parents divorced early in his life, and he grew up in Nebraska, Wyoming and Colorado.

Johnson spent his high school years in Montrose, Colo., where he ran track and played basketball and football.

"He was a quarterback, punter and played defense. His senior year his team went to state, but lost. We went out to that football game," said Johnson's aunt, Rhonda Johnson, also a Hoxie resident. Johnson attended college at the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley, where he earned a degree in sociology.

"He was red-shirted his freshman year, and was their punter and safety his junior and senior years.

"They took the Division II championship while he was on the team," Rhonda Johnson said.

She said her nephew was a "normal kid" when growing up and enjoying time with her two sons, Heath, 27, and Chad, 25.

"Dirk is a really good kid. He's a hard worker and my kids really enjoy him," she said.

Johnson said her family is one

which tries to get together for the holidays, and Dirk's presence has been less often since going professional.

She remembers one particular holiday when adults enjoyed a performance by the youth.

"One year at Thanksgiving, all the cousins did a skit and performed it for us. They used to have good times together," Rhonda Johnson said. Family members who will attend the game in Jacksonville include his wife, Jennifer, his father and step-mother, Diane, half-brother, J.J. Johnson, 34-year-old sister, Darcy, and his mother.

Rhonda Johnson said her nephew is constantly inspired by his sister who has battled bouts with life-threatening epileptic seizures after being born with a mild case of cerebral palsy.

The positive attitude his sister has shown all her life is part of who Dirk Johnson is today, Rhonda Johnson said. Having followed Dirk Johnson's sports career since he was young, she said one thing for sure is that the entire family will be cheering on Philadelphia Eagles No. 8 whether it's from the stands in Florida or in front of the tube in Hoxie.

Position: Punter
Height, Weight: 6-0, 205
NFL Experience: 2nd (2nd as an Eagle)
Acquired by Eagles: FA 2003
Originally joined NFL: Signed as a rookie free agent by Seattle in 1998



D. Johnson



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Bonnie Gilroy, vice president of the Kansas Army National Guard Enlisted Association ladies' auxiliary; Michelle Roemer, assistant service director at City Limits Convention Center; 1st Sgt. Manuel Rubio with the Detachment 2-170th Maintenance Com-

pany in Colby; association executive director Greg Gilroy and Glenda Bosey looked over the convention facilities at Comfort Inn in preparation for the Enlisted Association conference March 18-20.

National Guard readies for conference

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Kansas Army National Guard in Colby is gearing up for a busy March. Sgt. Manuel Rubio with the Detachment 2-107th Maintenance Company and members of the Enlisted Association of Kansas looked over City Limits Convention Center in preparation for the Enlisted Conference to be held March 18-20.

Rubio said the group is the Guard's professional association

and chose Colby as the site of its 33rd annual conference. The event will include a welcome, formal banquet and business sessions.

In conjunction with the conference, there will also be activities in celebration of the Kansas Army National Guard's 150th birthday.

Rubio said they're planning the festivities with the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce and they're trying to get the word out about it.

Tentative plans right now are for a parade at 2 p.m. Friday, March 18

to celebrate the Guard's birthday. Rubio would like to get the community involved in the military-themed parade.

"We're asking local entities to support the guard by doing a theme to celebrate 150 years of the Guard in Kansas," Rubio said.

He said the Colby High and Middle School bands are planning to participate and discussions with the city have already begun for the parade. Rubio also hopes to get vehicles from Fort Riley to be part of the parade and on display during

the weekend. There will also be a traveling museum exhibit on the Guard's history on display during the conference and birthday celebration. The public is invited to the parade and display, along with a hot dog feed that is still in the planning stages.

Rubio said the parade will probably be the only local celebration of the Guard's birthday.

For more information on the parade, Rubio said businesses or civic groups should call Leilani Thomas at 460-7643.

City Council begins reviewing draft document for tax abatements

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Following passage of the quarter-cent sales tax in Colby last November and economic growth continuing to escalate in the county, Mayor Warren Hixson, City Manager Carolyn Armstrong and council members all agreed it's time for a policy regarding tax abatements and other incentives when new businesses inquire.

In response, Armstrong recently drafted a policy outlining procedures for economic development and what requirements would be needed in order for a company to receive a tax abatement.

The 19-page draft copy has 33 sections and when approved in final form, Hixson said, will serve to enhance the quality of life for Thomas County residents through the creation of jobs while also providing incentives to new businesses.

Although state statutes allow for every firm, the city (working cooperatively with Thomas County and the Colby Chamber of Commerce) would limit its offering and target toward businesses "that best advance the interests of the entire community."

For example, in the draft section of economic development objectives, all partners would share a

commitment of encouraging existing businesses to expand; assisting new business start-ups; recruiting new companies from out-of-state and internationally; encouraging high-technology and research-based businesses, training and development of Colby area employees; and encouraging the location and retention of businesses which are good "corporate citizens," supporting philanthropic organizations and improving the quality of life.

The draft would also include the city's role in the economic development partnership by providing necessary zoning and infrastructure improvements.

One example that is currently underway is the new Wal-Mart Supercenter and the city's involve-

ment in improving roads, sewer and other utilities to the location.

In assisting with these types of improvements, the city would be fulfilling requirements to create new jobs and new investments.

With respect to new start-up businesses, expanding existing businesses, and relocations from other places, the city's role would be in providing personal assistance, and in some cases, incentives to include property tax exemptions for completion of the project.

The draft policy also includes sections on the types of businesses that could be considered such as whether or not it would be environmentally sound, as well as avoiding one large industry that could make the city dependent on it, but instead

defer to smaller or medium-sized. Another area that the city and its committees would consider in the abated project would be the average wage per employment category and whether or not it would meet or exceed the state's guidelines on wage survey.

For instance, in 2003 the average wage was \$21,334 with an hourly amount of \$10.26.

The draft outlines sections ranging from nominal tax determinations and special assessments to "public good" requirement, no unfair advantage and application.

Hixson said earlier this week that one of the reasons for some type of policy on tax abatements and other incentives was prompted by Truck Town's request in August of 2004.

At that time the owners, Kirk and Holly Young, spoke to the council about a tax abatement.

Not long after that, Hixson said the council decided the time had come to consider a standard set of guidelines for any business requesting property tax exemptions based on future inquiries.

"This way we have something in writing to give prospective developers," he said.

In addition to the city council reviewing the draft, members of the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance are also involved in the process as well.

Hixson said that with the sales tax going into effect in April, this policy will need to be in place not long after collection begins.

Colby
Atwood
Jennings



Snow over the horizon

Tonight...Clear. Lows in the upper 20s. West winds up to 10 mph.
Friday...Sunny. Highs in the lower 60s. Southwest winds 5 to 10 mph.
Friday night...Increasing clouds. Lows in the upper 20s. South winds 5 to 10 mph.
Saturday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the 50s. South winds 5 to 15 mph.
Saturday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 20s.
Sunday...Mostly cloudy. Highs around 40.
Sunday night...Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of snow. Lows in the lower 20s.
Monday...Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of snow. Highs in the upper 20s to around 30.

The numbers
Wednesday's high, 52
Low this morning, 23
Year ago today, 35 and 10
Records for this date, 70 in 1909 and -17 in 1989
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
February total, 0.00
February snowfall, 0 inches
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 available by calling 460-TEMP.

Briefly

Free income tax help available

For those retired and over 60 or with people with low-income, a special free service is available for filling out 1040s or uncomplicated income tax paperwork. Anyone who would like assistance on their 2004 Income Tax is asked to bring all W-2 information and other related documents to Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th, Colby from 1 to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays only, said Alvin Volk, assisting with preparations. This service will be provided every Wednesday through April 15. For questions or other general information, call Volk at 460-2645.

Pancake feed Saturday

There will be a pancake feed Saturday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Colby Community Building. The event is being sponsored by the Odd Fellow and Rebekahs with proceeds going toward providing a Thomas County freshman or sophomore scholarship.

Girl scouts soup supper Friday

Colby Girls Scouts from two different troops are hosting a soup supper in conjunction with the Colby/Oberlin basketball game starting at 5 p.m. at Colby Community Building on Friday. The activity, said Kathy Kersbrock-Ostmeier, co-coordinator, will allow the scouts to work on many badges in addition to raising money for a winter field trip. The troops involved include 165 and 132. The menu includes chili, chicken noodle, and potato with the cost free-will donation. Everyone is encouraged to attend and scouts will be taking cookie orders.

Singles dance Friday

The Colby Singles Group is sponsoring a dance from 8 p.m. to midnight, Friday, at the American Legion, 1850 W. 4th St. Entertainment is being provided by Jim Christiansen, Kearney, Neb. and the event is open to all alumni and single people. For questions, call Don Birzer, 462-2127.

Conservation District meeting planned

The Thomas County Conservation District will have its annual meeting and awards banquet on Tuesday, Feb. 22 at 6:30 p.m. in the 4-H Building. There is no charge to the event; however, reservations must be in no later than Friday, Feb. 11, said Lynette Koon, conservation district spokesperson. The agenda includes a meal, which is sponsored by the county banks, election of two district supervisors, presentation of conservation honors, posters and environmental teaching awards. Call 462-7482.

Photographs to be displayed

The Cultural Arts Center Gallery on the Colby Community College campus will be displaying selected photographs from "A Day In the Life Of Thomas County," during the month of February. The photographs are from three different seasons taken by amateur photographers who participated in the contest. The gallery is open Monday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. For questions, call Cathy Gordon at (785) 462-3984 (Ext. 310).

Genesis plans annual meeting

The annual meeting for Genesis-Thomas County is Tuesday, Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church, 515 W. 4th St., Colby. The meeting is open to the public.

