



COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

County deputy, school officials debate incident

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A Thomas County Sheriff's deputy did not test Golden Plains High School students for alcohol during a dance Saturday because school officials did not specifically ask for the test.

"I talked to the officer and he didn't indicate the school wanted him to come out and administer preliminary breath tests," Thomas County Undersheriff Jason Moses said this morning.

Moses said, in speaking with Deputy Brian Dirks about the incident, the issue of testing students had not come up before school officials started letting students leave with parents.

"By the time the deputy would have arrived at Rexford, half the kids may have been gone," Moses said.

"I feel the deputy handled the situation properly as it was presented to him that evening."

Golden Plains Superintendent Dr. Roger Baskerville reiterated his statement he made Monday that he called the Thomas County Sheriff's Office requesting a deputy breath test students.

Alcohol was found in a restroom during the school's annual Sweetheart Dance.

According to the Thomas County Sheriff's Office communication log Feb. 18, Baskerville called at 11:48 p.m.

The dispatcher's entry states Baskerville told the sheriff's office about the alcohol.

It also states no deputy was in the office at the time of the call and Baskerville requested the phone number to the county attorney.

"I called the county attorney's number and a recording said that was not a working number," Baskerville said.

Baskerville said he made three phone calls after finding alcohol in the school.

He called the sheriff's office and the county attorney's phone number he had been given.

The third call was made to an individual who "might be able to directly contact a deputy," he said. He declined to say a name.

According to the sheriff's log, an

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individual at 11:59 p.m. requested a deputy call Golden Plains. That individual advised the dispatcher school officials were "contacting parents to come and pick up kids."

Baskerville said after the individual called the law enforcement center, Dirks called the school saying he declined to administer the preliminary breath tests "because of implications with minors."

"In retrospect, Brian gave me some good advice," Baskerville said.

"I visited with Sheriff Mike Baughn this morning about the issues and it's still an ongoing investigation."

Moses said the call log does not indicate Baskerville requested a deputy to test the students for alcohol.

However, Moses said the sheriff's office "fully intends to find out who brought the alcohol to the school and where they got it."

Moses said the sheriff's office policy of leaving decisions to test for alcohol use will continue to be the discretion of each deputy.

Baskerville said he and Dirks have a good working relationship and is pleased with the advice he was given Friday.

Baskerville on Monday received support from the school board to implement a policy administering breath tests before school dances. Plans to purchase or share a breath testing machine with a nearby school are being considered, Baskerville said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby High School students walk to their next class Tuesday. A group of Colby residents are researching the feasibility of a youth

center for Thomas County youth to utilize after school and on weekends.

Youth have center of attention

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

There were as many ideas and thoughts about a proposed youth center in Colby as there are youth who may attend such a facility.

About 25 people at that Monday meeting were interested in turning those ideas into a place appropriate for Thomas County youth.

Colby's Todd Stramel is spearheading the proposal, something he has wanted to do for about 15 years.

"There have been youth centers before," he said. "But not like what we anticipate to build. This will be much more substantial."

Chris Shubert facilitated the discussion about what the people thought the center should be like. People agreed having a center targeted toward middle school age through college age that provides a substance-free, safe, entertaining environment.

"We need to be unified more than anything else," Shubert said. "That is what we are trying to do

here." Figuring out exact details and amenities of such a place has just begun.

People suggested having typical youth-oriented activities like a gymnasium, pool tables, pingpong tables, stereos, television sets, DVD players and concessions.

Opinions about the mood or personality of the center differed.

Intended for youth in age from 13 to 20, some said some certain age groups may not attend because they know another age group will be there.

"There is an age-related segregation in our society," Shubert said. "This is a rocky area."

People discussed having certain nights of the week or month dedicated to certain age groups so each group won't have to mix with others. People also in the audience suggested having events for entire families.

One teenage girl said it is possible youth will stay away knowing too many adults will be at the center, even though adults are needed to operate and supervise the center.

During the discussion, people

talked about how much spirituality should be involved in the center.

"Are we going to be talking to people about spiritual things," Shubert asked.

Those in attendance consented the center should take a passive approach to spirituality with the youth. Although there may be Christian-like symbols in the center, it does not mean the volunteers or employees of the center will lecture to youth about their spirituality. Some of the answers to those questions may be close by.

People at the meeting discussed the history and operation of other youth centers, like the YMCA in McCook, Neb., Back 2 Life in Kansas City, Mo., and a new center in Norton. The Norton center opens this month. One person in the crowd volunteered to acquire information about the Norton center.

The meeting did not include talk of where a center should be located in Colby.

Although that is a priority, Stramel said knowing what is in the center and how it operate is important at this point. Stramel volunteered to

write by-laws for the center and inquire about tax status.

"We need to eventually create a board," he said.

"We need to look at other centers. We may need to do this in phases."

Stramel hopes the response to Monday's meeting continues and grows as the center gets more organized.

"I'm just playing quarterback to keep it moving," he said. "I hope others will step forward. With other things, there has been a lot excitement up front but eventually lose interest and falls apart."

Stramel encouraged those who may be interested in helping with the center to do their own research.

"If you know of high school kids, please find out what they want," he said.

For information about assisting with the center, contact Stramel at 460-3222. The next meeting has been tentatively set at 7 p.m. March 6 at Pioneer Memorial Library.

Eagle wrestlers off to state

By Tracy Rogers
Colby Free Press

Colby High School wrestlers are gearing up for the state tournament this weekend at Salina.

This is the first year that 4A schools will be at a location by themselves.

The Eagles are one of four regional champions competing for the state team title. Other regional winners are Abilene, who have eight wrestlers, five of which won their weight class at regionals. Columbus also has eight competitors, four being regional champs. Baldwin is the other regional winner and they are sending seven wrestlers to Salina, four of them regional champs.

Defending state champ Clay Center will be a factor as they are sending 11 wrestlers.

Two teams Colby competed with at Russell that figure to be in the mix are Goodland and Andale. Goodland sends 11 wrestlers including two regional champs. Andale sends eight wrestlers, five of them having won their weight classes.

Colby wrestlers and their first round matchups are as follows:



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby High School Eagle wrestlers (from left to right) Kyle Withington, Taylor Finley and Daniel Gonzales listened to fellow wrestler Cole Garcia (with microphone) talk during a send-off today.

103 lbs.: Bryan Brewer (sophomore) 30-7 vs. Austin Atwood (sophomore) 23-7 from Wamego.

112: Brent Luedke (sophomore) 30-4 vs. Jared Ribelin (sophomore) 26-7 from Royal Valley.

119: Trenton Powell (junior) 23-8 vs. Nathan Sommer (freshman) 31-11 from Prairie View.

125: Hunter Olsen (sophomore) 22-13 vs. Jake Hoesli (junior) 34-11 from Concordia.

130: Jared Flanagan (sophomore) 26-17 vs. C.J. Napier (freshman) 30-4 from Columbus.

135: Daniel Gonzales (sophomore) 25-9 vs. Keith Shepard (senior) 27-6 from Independence.

140: Cole Garcia (senior) 36-0 vs. Brice Biehler (senior) 19-6 from Louisburg.

145: Taylor Finley (senior) 31-3 vs. Aaron Quisenberry (sophomore) 27-7 from KC Ward.

152: Kyle Withington (senior) 27-11 vs. Joey Hambleton (sophomore) 31-6 from Labette County.

171: Tanner Kriss (freshman) 17-15 vs. Dustin Bartlett (senior) 38-1 from Atchison.

275: Taylor Brown (sophomore) 11-14 vs. Ethan Leroy (senior) 29-14 from Chanute.

Garcia will be attempting to repeat as a state champion, as well as keep his perfect record intact.

Finley will be looking to improve on his third place finish from last year.

Colby coach Mitch Beims was very appreciative of the crowd that followed the Eagles last week to Russell.

"We want an even bigger crowd this weekend in Salina. We need lots of black and orange in the stands at the Bi-Centennial Center. We are excited about 4A moving to Salina. Four mats will allow us to start later and finish much, much earlier on Friday." Beims expected Friday's wrestling to be finished by 7:30 p.m. First round action begins at 10 a.m. Friday.

City OKs vehicle

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The Colby Police Department's K-9 officer and four-legged partner will get to cruise in style.

Colby City Council approved a new vehicle Tuesday.

The council approved soliciting bids for a used or off-lease Chevy Tahoe or Ford Expedition to be used as a K-9 vehicle.

New mayor Ken Bieber asked if such a vehicle was too big to haul a dog. Currently, a Ford Explorer is being used.

Councilman Tim Hutfles said K-9 officer Bobby Herren carries a lot of equipment and needs the extra room.

"They need a vehicle that will suit them a bit better," Hutfles said.

Police Chief Randy Jones said the vehicle is essentially Herren's office.

He's a special response team member and carries everything he needs in the vehicle.

"It's extremely compact," Jones said. "We can't even transport a prisoner in that vehicle."

Gas mileage of the Explorer was discussed.

"The K-9 unit won't get good mileage," Jones said. He said, in the summer if the officer is working an accident the vehicle has to be left running for the air conditioner for the dog.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby City Councilman Ken Bieber was sworn in as mayor during the council's meeting Tuesday. Bieber replaces Warren Hixson who resigned this month. Hixson is moving to Hutchinson.