



COLBY FREE PRESS

Charges filed Colby woman faces attempted murder

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A Colby woman has been charged with the attempted second-degree murder, aggravated battery and child abuse of her 23-month old daughter.

Amanda F. Harris, 19, was arrested on Wednesday 1-mile into Thomas County on Interstate 70 as she was returning from a shopping trip in Hays.

Colby Police Investigator Gary Shull said this morning authorities from Gove and Logan Counties were notified to locate and observe Harris' vehicle as it was westbound on the interstate.

Shull said when Harris crossed the county line into Thomas County she slowed down after noticing authorities, and was stopped and taken into custody without incident at 4:27 p.m. Harris was then transported to Colby and booked into the Thomas County Jail.

Harris' arrest stems from an incident on Feb. 13, during which time her daughter was injured and airlifted to a Denver hospital.

"Our consensus is that (Harris) intentionally caused her daughter to get blunt force to the head and have trauma through some kind of air conditioning or air handling unit



A. Harris

"Our consensus is that (Harris) intentionally caused her daughter to get blunt force to the head and have trauma through some kind of air conditioning or air handling unit. . ."

Gary Shull,
Colby police investigator

such as an air conditioner or air humidifier.

"That's how we believe she sustained the head injury. She also had soft tissue damage to the arms, legs, buttocks, chest and shoulders, but we don't know how she sustained those," Shull said.

The incident was reported to authorities by the Protection Report Center, the after-hours center of the Kansas Social Rehabilitation Service about 5 a.m. on Feb. 14.

Upon the child's release from the hospital, she and her 11-month old sister were placed in protective custody and are living in a foster home in western Kansas.

Shull said the older of the two girls will continue to require neurological surgery care and observation.

"I'm told she is recovering well and gaining weight," he said.

Shull said while Harris is not the only adult to have had contact with the child the day of the incident, she

is the only one being charged.

He said the investigation has ruled out as suspects the father, Justin Harris, 19, as well as his girlfriend, Rosemary Schutte, and Amanda Harris' boyfriend, Eric Schiltz.

Amanda Harris and Justin Harris have been separated since late December, Shull said. This is not the first time Harris has had one of her children taken away from her, Shull said.

On May 30, 2003, Harris' youngest daughter was taken into protective custody when authorities were notified the child had been admitted to Citizens Medical Center for malnutrition and dehydration.

"The child was taken into emergency protective custody and she was 2-months old at that time," Shull said.

A preliminary hearing for Harris has been scheduled for 10 a.m., Friday, March 4, at the Thomas County Courthouse in Colby.

Giving it some thought



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Shasti Stupka and Karlee Krey watched nervously while classmate Trek Keck took his turn at the microphone during the practice round before the fourth grade spelling bee on Wednesday. The third, fourth and fifth grades will have participated in spelling bees this week in the Colby Grade School auditorium. Today, the third graders competed in the contest.

County learns more about sheriff's office, jail expansion

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners got a look at how the sheriff's office is run during their meeting Monday at the courthouse.

Sheriff Mike Baughn and Under-sheriff Jason Moses gave the presentation.

Baughn said the department worked 716 cases last year, which included accidents and criminal incidents.

On average, about seven people were booked per day.

Most cases were routine public matters, fish and game related, ac-

cidents, traffic enforcement, unattended deaths and process serving.

"We have quite varied duties," Baughn said.

This year, he said, cases are already up about 100 over the same time last year.

The agency has 14 vehicles in its fleet, eight of which are patrol vehicles.

Baughn said he has the administration set up slightly different than Tom Jones did while he was sheriff.

Jones gave Baughn the duty of administering the budget, which he has kept now he's sheriff and has

made Moses the jail administrator. Baughn also deals with public relations and the press.

He invited the commissioners to come tour the jail, which prompted commissioner Paul Steele to ask about jail expansion.

"Business over there isn't going to change," Steele said, adding he would encourage them to get whatever architectural help they need to look at what could be done to expand the current facility.

Commissioner Ron Evans asked how much more drug forfeiture money they can spend.

Baughn said that money can only

be spent on anything law-enforcement related, and then only items that wouldn't normally be in the regular budget.

"Basic things have to come out of the budget," he said.

Steele said their first priority should be modernizing the jail.

Road improvements were also on the agenda.

Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong was there to discuss improvements to Willow, Franklin and Country Club Drive.

Evans said the county will be responsible for improvements to Willow between I-70 exits 53 and 54.

The street runs east-west north of the interstate.

He said they were doing some long-range planning for when a new Wal-Mart store will be built. The road improvements will be a joint county-city project.

The road will be given to the city in the future when it is annexed into the city.

Armstrong said she just wanted reassurance they were all on the same page.

Ron Redick with High Plains Mental Health in Colby was also at the meeting.

He told the commissioners the

organization's director will be coming to a meeting in the next month or two to see if they have any concerns.

The organization has five branch offices and of those, Colby has the largest, serving five counties with 17 staff members.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Heard a presentation on the county weed department from Ken Ptacek.

- Approved paying the \$7,685 membership fee for the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission.

College trustees hear about long-term plans

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

The public information officer at Colby College presented the board of trustees with a brief history of how that office has changed at their meeting Monday night.

The purpose for the review was in looking at a long-term plan and how the office could better serve the college, said Debbie Schwanke, public information officer.

She outlined the responsibilities she has today and how that office has added and been reconfigured throughout the years.

More than 10 years ago, the public information office did not teach classes nor was it involved in the student newspaper, *The Trojan Express*.

Yet over time, the shift has moved from developing news releases taking photographs and acting as a clearinghouse to more.

Today, as public information of-

ficer, Schwanke's function requires her to coordinate special projects, all college advertising and marketing, updates college events, serves as chair for the EduKan marketing committee, along with teaching, supervising the newspaper, acting as journalism advisor and much more.

In her presentation, she noted that the college must continue to show a consistent look and consider updating its logo.

A campus-wide theme or motto has also been something the marketing committee is working on, she said. Citing Fort Hays State University's motto of "Affordable Success," the committee has considered theme's such as "Start Small, Finish Big," and updating the billboard on Interstate 70.

The tag line could be used on all publications, the Colby College website and other places where appropriate, she said.

Cleona Flipse, one of the trustees, offered the suggestion of staying with the "Oasis" theme — maybe "Oasis for Learning" or somehow putting learning with Oasis.

Schwanke and the committee also believes a graphic arts position could be added when the print shop manager, Fred Miller, retires.

In the current configuration, she said, the public information office produces institutional and individual brochures and promotional materials.

With the addition of a graphic arts professional, these responsibilities could be reassigned allowing the public information officer to focus on other projects.

The trustees agreed moving from low tech to high tech is the way of the future, adding that they were willing to hear more about what it would take to go in that direction.

"I think we also need to target adult learners," Schwanke said. By

working with the marketing committee and Joe Mildrexler, dean of community services, a promotional campaign could be initiated to target that age group, she said.

Other long-term goals Schwanke spoke about included providing assistance and support to the endowment foundation for the capital campaign; developing an advertising campaign; continue producing "Campus Connection," which is published bi-weekly in the *Colby Free Press*; and reaching out to radio and television for publicizing college activities.

"We need to do professional commercials," she said, adding that the college needs to compete and give prospective students a reason to come here.

The trustees queried on what it would take to get going on these ideas and instructed Schwanke and the committee to bring back more detailed information.

Colby Hoxie Oakley



Moisture chances not good

Tonight...Mostly clear. Lows in the lower 20s. Southwest winds 5 to 10 mph. **Friday...**Mostly sunny. Highs in the upper 50s. West winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the south in the afternoon. **Friday night...**Partly cloudy. Lows in the mid 20s. South winds 5 to 10 mph. **Saturday...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 50s. South winds 5 to 10 mph increasing to 15 to 20 mph in the afternoon. **Saturday night...**Mostly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of rain after midnight. Lows in the lower 30s. **Sunday...**Mostly cloudy. Slight chance of rain in the morning, then chance of rain in the afternoon. Highs in the mid 40s. Chance of rain 30 percent.

The numbers

Wednesday's high, 37
Low this morning, 20
Year ago today, 38 and 20
Records for this date, 76 in 1958 and -12 in 1960
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
Precipitation for month to date: 0.34
Snowfall for month to date: 3.7 inches
Soil temperature, 38

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.

Briefly

All-School Reunion information sought

If any Colby High School alumni are planning get-togethers for their particular class at this years All-School Reunion and would like it listed in the registration packet, call or email Tracy Rogers, one of the reunion organizers, at 460-3128 or email:tr7979@hotmail.com. The deadline for getting information to him is Friday, March 4.

Murder mystery event planned

Pioneer Memorial Library is sponsoring its first-ever Murder Mystery at 7 p.m., Saturday, March 5. This will be the perfect opportunity for those

amateur sleuths to solve a mystery, organizers said. Local celebrities will act out this tongue-and-cheek mystery. Hors d'oeuvres and dessert are included in the \$10 ticket on sale at the library. Questions, 460-4470.

Homestead property tax deadline nearing

The county clerk's office is reminding everyone that it's time for residents eligible to submit their claim for Homestead property tax refunds and food sales tax refunds. The Thomas County Clerk's office has the forms available and will assist in completing them. The deadline for filing is April 15, 2005.

