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Seniors
ending
school

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Nine Golden Plains seniors said good-bye to high school during graduation at Rexford Sunday.

Ryan Altman, Brett Dible, Stephen Mackey, Jesse Miller, Shawn Simons, Darcie Spresser, Nichole Spresser, Homero Vargas and Kristin Wark received their diplomas.

Miller gave the student's prayer and the salutatory and valedictory were given by Wark and Nichole Spresser, respectively.

The speaker for the ceremony was the class' middle school teacher, Leanna Schultz, who gave them some practical advice on life in the real world. She also spoke at their eighth grade graduation four years ago.

Schultz told the class they will have to have courage and be willing to make mistakes.

She said that only by making mistakes, admitting to them and moving on can learning be accomplished.

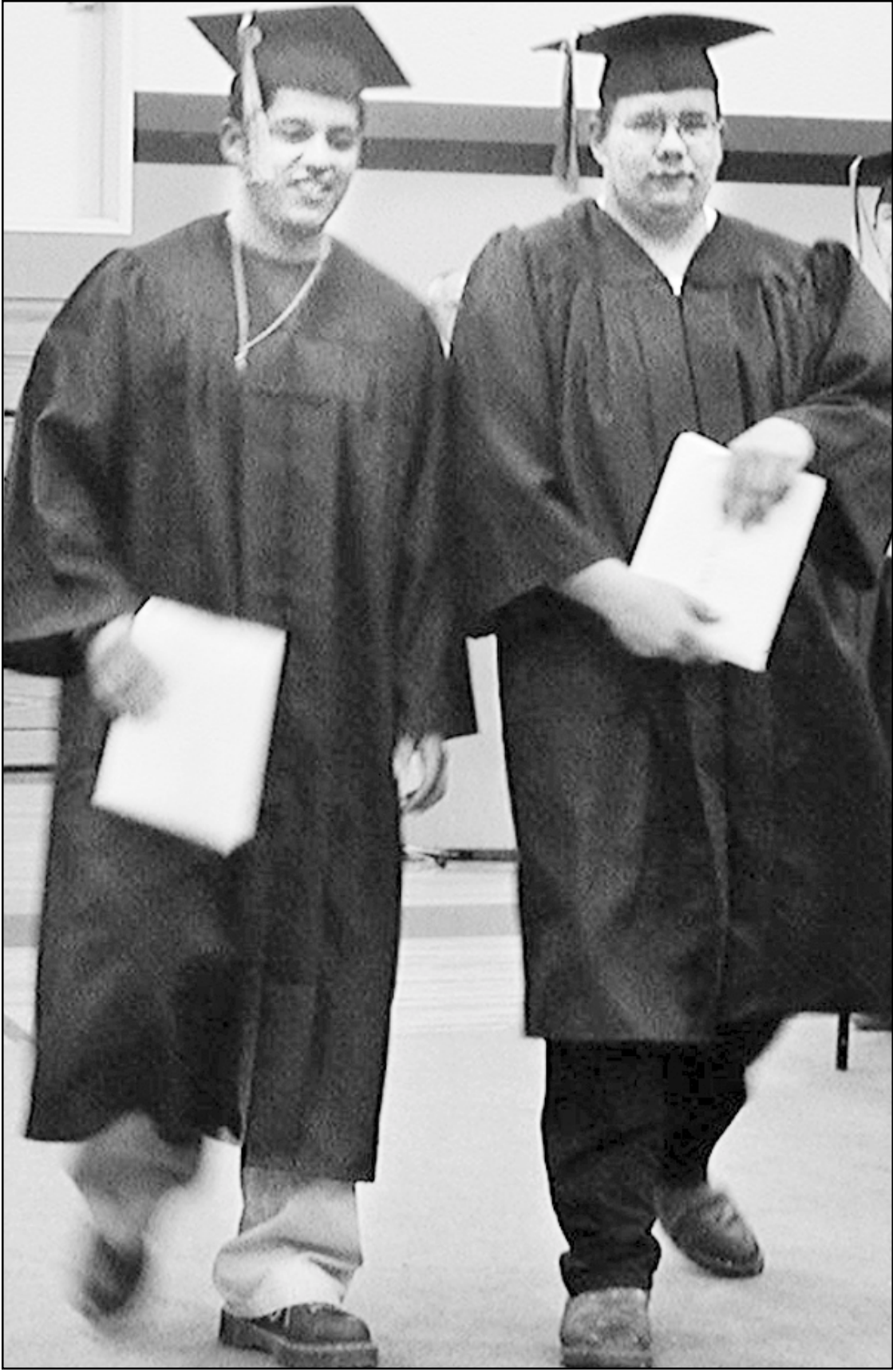
She also said they will have to decide what kind of adults they want to be charged them to take care of themselves because now they're heading into the real world, they will have to do it themselves.

Schultz also briefly talked about how college is different from high school. She said the taxpayers and the community took care of the bill for their public education but in college, you pay for it up front.

She said the only way to get their education is to "go pick it up."

That means attending class every day and doing the necessary work.

Dr. Seuss' *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* was also part of her speech. After Schultz's presentation, the senior video was



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press
Golden Plains graduates Homero Vargas and Stephen Mackey carried their diplomas with them as they left the gym after graduation Sunday. Nine seniors received their diplomas/

shown. It featured a picture montage of the class' time in high school as well as pictures of each of them growing up.

Following the video, the seniors

presented their mothers with roses for Mother's Day.

During the festivities, Superintendent Dr. Roger Baskerville honored retiring teachers Willis Crab-

tree for his years of service to the school.

The graduation ceremony was followed with a reception sponsored by the Booster Club.

Officer tells
tragedy, death
of area soldier

TOPEKA (AP) — Nothing in 25 years of military experience prepared Lt. Col. Lee Tafanelli for what happened May 1 as his soldiers patrolled Baghdad, Iraq.

Around 7:30 p.m., three armored Humvees were inspecting bridges and conducting reconnaissance when a civilian vehicle approached. The 12 soldiers of the Kansas Army National Guard followed their training and motioned for the car to pull to the side of the road. The first two Army vehicles passed without incident.

A third, carrying four members of Company A, 891st Engineer Battalion from Pittsburg, wasn't as lucky. The civilian vehicle exploded, killing Spc. Derrick Joseph Lutters, 24, a native of Goodland, and wounding three others.

"You have a lot of life experiences in the course of 25 years," Tafanelli said in a telephone interview from his post in Iraq. "I don't think any of those experiences or training can prepare you for this."

"There is no news more devastating than to hear that one of your soldiers is killed in action."

It was the battalion's first fatality of the war; the unit arrived in Iraq in December. Lutters became the third member of the Kansas National Guard killed in combat.

The other two were Staff Sgt. Clinton Wisdom, 39, of Atchison, and Sgt. Don Clary, 21, of Troy, who were killed Nov. 8 when they positioned their vehicle between a high-ranking delegation and a suicide car bomber. They were members of Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery Regiment, based at Hiawatha.

Members of Lutters' unit held a memorial service for him Wednesday, while a second ceremony was held for the remainder of the battalion over the weekend.

"It was a very sad day for them, of course. It offered some closure

for those who served with him,"

said Tafanelli, a former member of the Kansas House who resigned his seat in January when ordered to Iraq.

Coincidentally, the Legislature was debating a bill to give a \$125,000 death benefit to the families of Wisdom and Clary at the time Lutters was killed.

Tafanelli said the patrol did everything correctly when the incident occurred, making sure oncoming traffic was a safe distance from the Army vehicles as they crossed paths.

"You take a step back as a leader, reassess the situation, apply any lessons learned and apply it to the next mission," Tafanelli said.

Since it has been in Iraq, he said, the battalion has been repairing infrastructure and patrolling to see that its work remains in place. Tafanelli said the soldiers believe they are making life safer for Iraqis and coalition forces still there.

"The security of all of our soldiers is a priority all the time. But this is a very dangerous place," he said. "Incidents happen, as regrettable as they are."

Funeral arrangements for Lutters are incomplete. He was single and living in Burlington, Colo., where he was a corrections officer. His family lives in Goodland.

A briefing is scheduled for Tuesday in Goodland to explain to family and friends about the incident that claimed Lutters. A counselor and Col. Larry Parrish, a Kansas National Guard chaplain, plan to answer questions at the Goodland armory. Lutters' funeral will be held at 10 a.m., Thursday in the Max Jones Fieldhouse in Goodland.



D. Lutters

Thomas County commissioners discuss township roads

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Township roads were on the table at this morning's Thomas County commissioners' meeting at the courthouse.

Frank Jurek, who lives in Summers Township, wanted to know what could be done to get sand on his road to keep it from getting muddy and water-logged after rain.

Township board members Everett Theimer, Barry Kaaz and Dee Olson were at the meeting to also talk about the matter.

Chairman Ron Evans said the commissioners don't interfere with township business.

"That's not what we're here for," Evans said.

Kaaz said they're trying to sand all the roads in the township and will get to Jurek's road when they can. He said it will probably be this fall or winter when it can be finished because they want to continue to elevate the road as much as possible before sanding it.

Theimer said the road is actually high on

the priority list and now it's just a matter of being patient.

Lloyd Theimer also had road concerns. He showed pictures to the commissioners of where people have been planting where they shouldn't.

The commissioner said it's not a unique problem in the county. Evans said they know it goes on and the only solution he could think of would be putting a fence up on county right-of-ways much like the state has fenced the land along I-70. He said it

would probably solve the problem but isn't ideal because it would cost too much money.

County road department supervisor Clair Schrock also was at the meeting. He gave an update on the Country Club and Willow projects as well as informed the commissioners the money in the special highway fund will be exhausted before the year is out.

More than \$290,000 is currently in the fund but most of the money is going to the

two road projects.

On that subject, he said the work on Country Club is progressing well. Concrete has been poured and they should finish with that by sometime next week.

Schrock said they're also starting to look into the cost of asphalt for the Willow project.

In other business, the commissioners approved: Minutes for the April 29 and May 2 meetings and the job description for the emergency management position.

Babysitting practice



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press
Abi Rohr and Brianna Quenzer practiced changing diapers during an American Red Cross babysitting class at Trinity Lutheran Church Saturday. Attendees learned how to care for infants and toddlers during the class.

Two Marines killed in fighting

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — U.S. forces tracked down a band of insurgents in eastern Afghanistan, killing about 12 in a battle that also left two Marines dead, the military said Monday.

The military said warplanes also joined the clash with about 25 insurgents on Sunday evening in the eastern province of Laghman, an opium-producing region where U.S. forces regularly battle militants.

Marines "located the insurgents and an engagement ensued," the military said. "Two U.S. Marines were killed." The names of the dead were not released.

U.S. spokesman Col. James Yonts said "about a dozen" rebels were killed but made no mention of injuries on either side.

Militants opposed to the U.S.-backed government of President Hamid Karzai have made good on threats to step up their three-year-old insurgency, carrying out assaults and bombings that have killed dozens of Afghan and U.S. troops and government officials in

recent weeks.

However, they have suffered heavy casualties in clashes where American warplanes have caught them in large groups on open ground. The Marines died days after the bloodiest fighting in Afghanistan in nine months, when U.S. and Afghan forces including American warplanes clashed with large groups of insurgents in two southern provinces.

Sixty-four rebels, nine Afghan soldiers and an Afghan policeman were reported killed, while six American troops were among the

wounded.

American commanders insist they are wearing the insurgents down and persuading villagers along the Pakistani border to stop sheltering them.

They have also suggested that the United States might withdraw some of its 18,000 troops in Afghanistan after the Sept. 18 parliamentary elections supposed to crown the country's democratic rebirth. But that depends on the success of a reconciliation plan which has prompted a string of former Taliban allies to give up the fight.



Lending
a hand
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