



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Colby woman pleads to aggravated battery

By **Patty Decker**
Free Press Editor

A 19-year-old Colby woman pled guilty to aggravated battery on her 2-year-old daughter Wednesday in the Thomas County District Court.

In the plea arrangement, Amanda Faye Harris agreed to the aggravated battery felony charge in exchange for the Thomas County Attorney Andrea Wyrick dropping the child abuse felony.

"This is the same level of felony and even if she were convicted on both charges, there would be no jail time," Wyrick said.

Prior to Harris' plea agreement this week, the second degree attempted murder charge had been dropped after the facts from an eyewitness didn't support the intent needed for an attempted murder charge, Wyrick said.

Now that Harris has pled to the

felony charge of aggravated battery, a pre-sentencing investigation will be done.

Based on guidelines by state statute and the recommendation from the investigation, Harris will appear on July 6 at 10 a.m. for the sentencing phase.

Wyrick said that based on the new facts presented during the latter part of May that Harris' actions were more reckless than an intentional toward the child.

"I think it was a fair outcome," she said.

In the original police report, Harris was charged with attempted murder, child abuse and battery stemming from an incident in mid-February that resulted in her daughter being airlifted to a Denver hospital.

The injuries were considered life-threatening, said Gary Shull, police

investigator, at that time.

Initially, police believed Harris was alleged to have intentionally injured her daughter's head on either an air conditioner or air humidifier unit.

While police suspected the reason for the child's head injury, they were unsure as to the cause of the child's other injuries to her arms, legs, buttocks, chest and shoulders.

Harris was arrested in the latter part of February after authorities with the Protection Report Center, an after-hours center for the Kansas Social Rehabilitation Service, found sufficient reason to suspect abuse.

Following her arrest at that time, Shull said, Harris was released on a \$300,000 signature bond on Feb. 28. Harris, who has two children, are both currently living with a foster family in western Kansas.

Wheat crop looks good, bad depending on location

By **Tisha Cox**
Colby Free Press

Depending on where it's at and how much rain it received, wheat in Thomas County could have decent yields.

David Denneler, farm manager for Frahm Farms, said he hasn't looked at all the wheat but some looks promising.

"It's definitely going to be worth cutting," he said, adding the late wheat looks the best, and could yield between 20-40 bushels an acre.

All of the farm's wheat is dryland this year.

Denneler said their wheat is a continuous crop and was planted after last year's corn. The wheat might not be as good as some, he said, but he is expecting a year better than the past few.

"We have some that's going to do real well," Denneler said.

A late freeze didn't cause as much damage as originally thought

All of the farm's wheat is west of Colby, and north and south of Levant.

He said the northerly wheat isn't as good because it didn't get as much rain but the southern fields should offer up an "average crop."

Bill Miller of Colby, who has farm land in Thomas, Rawlins and Sherman counties, said his dryland and irrigated wheat has a range of conditions.

Some of his dryland wheat has held on and his continuous crop wheat is "stressing." Recent rain has helped bring some of the crop back, but other factors like a late freeze, rust and dry conditions in some fields has had an impact.

In his irrigated field, the wheat dodged the freeze and is coming back for the most part.

Miller said he doesn't expect this year's harvest to be a "bin-buster" but he thinks the harvest will be average.

His lowest yield could be as low as 10 bushels an acre on dryland and up to 50 bushels per acre on the irrigated wheat, and that's if good weather prevails. He said he didn't want to be pessimistic and hopes for the best.

"I'll take what comes," Miller said, adding he's glad to see so much rain recently. "It's refreshing to see everything green and growing."

Also, he said all of his wheat will be cut this year regardless of its yields. He said it has to be done to get ready for the next crop to go in.

New truck in service



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

The City of Colby started using its new bucket truck (above) after approval for purchase by the city council last week. One of the more pressing projects for the electric department using the new truck was on Country Club Drive across the street from the Colby sale barn. For this project, both bucket trucks were being used to repair power transmission lines today.

Doctor, administrator offer the other side of board action

By **Jan Katz Ackerman**
Colby Free Press

HOXIE—The doctor fired from Hoxie's health care facility believes the public is being shortchanged of the truth.

"I did my job and then some," Dr. Margarita Hammeke said.

Dr. Hammeke started working at Sheridan County Health Complex last month and on Tuesday was told her services were no longer needed. Besides the doctor, her husband, Paul Hammeke, administrator at the complex, was fired.

The doctor, who is Hispanic and Native American, believes racism is part of the reason the couple no longer has jobs.

"We've had (racial) slurs and innuendoes made toward us. We've been told, 'We don't need Mexicans in this town.' This

leaves us feeling unwelcome," Dr. Hammeke said.

Already taking steps to locate another position, the doctor said the board of trustees gave her no reason why she was let go. On Tuesday, board vice-chairman Randy Farber said the board was advised by its attorney not to make statements about the Hammekes.

Dr. Hammeke said the trustees never requested she speak to them about pending problems, even after 15 disgruntled employees met with them last week behind closed doors.

"I never was asked to come and talk to the board, but last Thursday I happened on a special meeting at which I was allowed to speak with them," she said.

After being handed a paper on Tuesday

saying she could no longer work at the complex, Dr. Hammeke said she asked Richard Krannawitter, board chairman, if the board wanted to meet with her. She said she told Krannawitter there had to be some way to work things out and that she cared about the community. She said she told him there had been a significant monetary investment to bring her to the complex and it would be difficult to attract a doctor with the current situation at hand. Krannawitter was not available for comment when called Wednesday evening.

Dr. Hammeke said she speculates her firing also stems from a misunderstanding about her wanting to do research she believed necessary for quality patient care. She planned to take that time the last week while the facility was staffed with Olathe-

based Docs Who Care and nurse practitioner Kaylee Watkins.

She said the first week she was on staff at the complex she was asked to evaluate some of the equipment and found much of it "antiquated."

"I was asked to make decisions about things which would deal with a patient's life or me getting sued. The worst case being someone dying," Dr. Hammeke said.

At a recent special board meeting, the trustees told Paul Hammeke to tell the doctor she couldn't take time off for research.

The doctor also believes allegations which surfaced last week that Paul Hammeke was favoring her at work stemmed from Ruth Greenlee, clinic manager. When Greenlee was contacted Wednesday evening, she said "No comment."

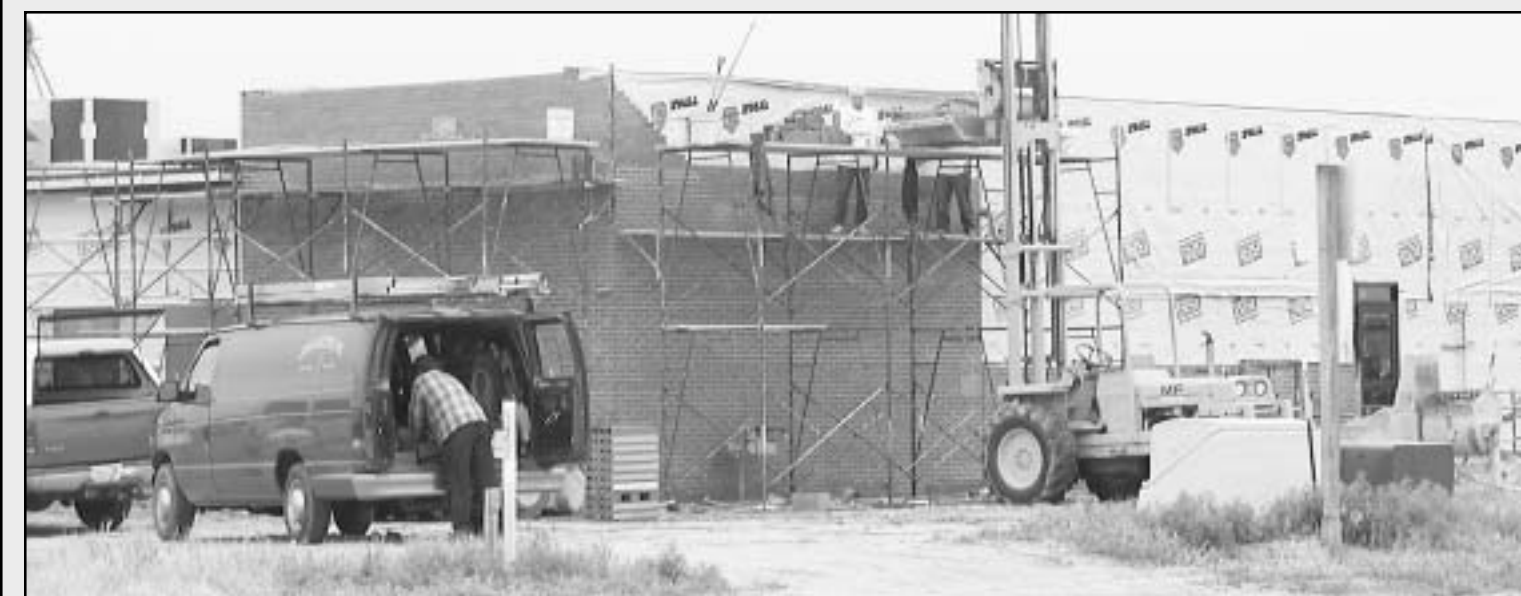
Paul Hammeke is as baffled about the situation as Dr. Hammeke.

"I was given no written or verbal reason why (I was fired). Though members of the board and employees have no evidence of nepotism, (allegations) seems to have colored their perception of the situation," he said. "I was starting to reinforce and reacquaint the employees with the employee handbook and that was upsetting some people," he said.

Despite the upset in employment, the Hammekes are not letting the situation dampen their spirits.

"After reviewing our options here, we'll regroup, recover and look to start again as soon as we can," Paul Hammeke said. "We'll ask all the right questions next time," Dr. Hammeke said.

Construction continues on state building



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

The signs of progress were evident as work continued on the outside of the new state building located on South Country Club Drive. Right: Bricklayers worked on the west wall Thursday afternoon.

