



COLBY FREE PRESS

4-H fair recruits youth

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Youth interested in joining Thomas County 4-H had the chance to learn more about the organization during a project fair at the 4-H Building Tuesday.

Extension agent Joe Leibbrandt said more than 30 kids came to the event, and some even decided to join.

"We had a decent crowd," he said. "We got some new 4-Hers."

The purpose was to show off project areas and to recruit new members, Leibbrandt said. Areas of interest were represented with projects and youth involved in them, like livestock, geology, foods, sewing and dogs and cats.

Most of the youth who came were new and looking to join, Leibbrandt said, adding the fair had the desired effect.

Along with recruiting youth, he said they've also had some new 4-H leaders join up county-wide, adding some new project areas, including woodworking, rabbits and entomology.

Leibbrandt said they're excited about it and are hoping more people are willing to step up and be leaders in other areas.

They also have people willing to help out this year with goat and photography projects. There aren't any official leaders for either, but kids in those projects will get direction from the people who've volunteered to help out.

The fair was organized by the 4-H Council, including Josh Mazanec, Henry Lamm, Brenda Wilson, Melissa Baird, Tim Knox, Rachel Juenemann and Katera Harter.

Leibbrandt said they all did a good job organizing and getting ready for the fair.

"We're pretty happy with how



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Marc and Elaine Bremenkamp (standing) watched Rachel Myers sew during the 4-H project fair Tuesday at the 4-H Building at the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

this went," he said.

He also stressed kids don't have to live in the country to be involved. With so many project areas, there's plenty to choose from for everyone. Leibbrandt said there are also self-

determined projects, which kids can do on their own.

More importantly, he said kids gain leadership experience in 4-H, along with public speaking, community service and parliamentary

procedure.

"They can be educated and have fun while doing it all," Leibbrandt said.

For more information on 4-H, call (785) 460-4582.

Elevator discussion on the rise

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A Colorado man's fall inside the courthouse in Hoxie has once again prompted talk about elevator installation.

John Bergman, 77, Aurora, on Sept. 22, fell down about 10-feet of the marble stairs located inside Sheridan County's courthouse. Bergmann sustained bruising to his right shoulder and ribs.

"I can't understand why they don't have an elevator," Bergmann said. "Not to have one is inexcusable."

Bergman, who has had both hips replaced, is legally considered disabled. While he is able to walk up stairs, in order to bear his own weight Bergmann must descend stairs by going down them backwards. When he fell in Hoxie, he was trying to navigate the stairs using off-set handrails which line both sides of the staircase.

Bergman does title searches for a Denver-based oil company and needs access to the Sheridan County Register of Deeds office in order to perform his job. That office is located on the second floor of the courthouse.

One of Bergman's associates, Mike Faas, an attorney from Denver who also does oil and gas lease research, finds it unconscionable county officials have not installed an elevator in the building.

"The basis of this issue is compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act," Faas said. "Every

other county in the area has bitten the bullet but this county. I don't know what their plan of action is, but with John it's his livelihood getting up to the register of deeds office. How many people have to be injured?"

Faas said when Bergman's accident took place he was treated at the local medical clinic and referred back to his doctor in Colorado.

"The big concern is if John would have cracked his head. While his insurance covered him, he wouldn't recover with his age," Faas said.

After Bergman fell, Faas talked to the county commissioners about the incident.

"The commissioners volunteered to help John get up and down the stairs and they said they have a phone downstairs, but that won't work for John. For instance, with this entry, there are 35 books to be pulled," Faas said referring to large registry books needed for title searches.

Faas said he doesn't have an argument with Sheridan County other than his belief it needs to install an elevator in the courthouse.

As far back as June 1999, boards of commissioners have talked about installing an elevator in the courthouse in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. That Act went into effect on Jan. 26, 1992, with structural changes to allow accessibility to have been done by Jan. 26, 1995.

See "ELEVATOR," page 3

John Van Nostrand named new *Free Press* publisher

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

After a long search for the right person, a new *Colby Free Press* publisher was named.

Combining enthusiasm with more than a decade of education and experience, John Van Nostrand, the former managing editor of a daily newspaper in Creston, Iowa, is excited about his challenges in Colby.

As for his philosophy on publishing a small-town newspaper, Van Nostrand's answer was simple.

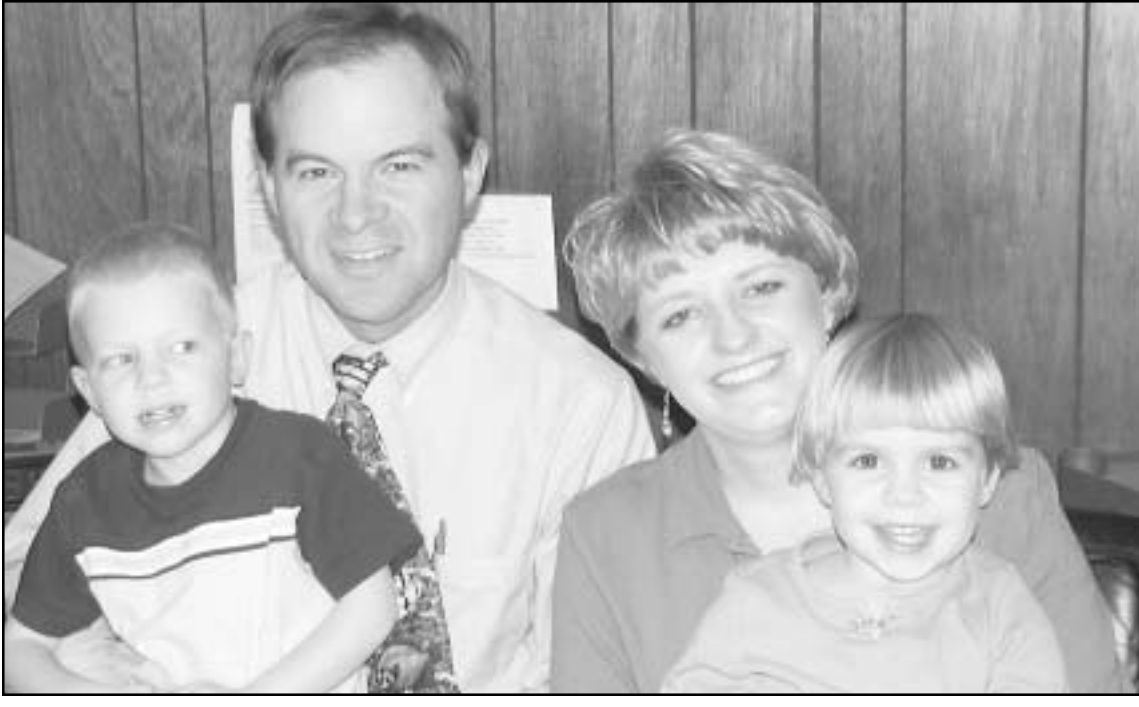
"This is our readers' newspaper," he said, adding that he has an open door policy for suggestions or other input.

Regarding changes in the look of the newspaper or office procedures, Van Nostrand said he is not at that point yet.

"I would like to wait until I know more about the *Free Press* and its staff, the town and trends."

One asset the Van Nostrands bring to the area is how much they enjoy opportunities that involve them with community organizations.

For example, in Greenfield, Iowa, where John and his family had lived prior to Colby, wife Jen-



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

John Van Nostrand, new publisher, with his wife, Jennifer, and children, Grant and Kari.

nifer coordinated a 30-year anniversary and reunion celebration of the movie "Cold Turkey," which was filmed in 1969 in Greenfield. The comedy included Dick Van Dyke,

Tom Poston, Jean Stapleton and produced by Norman Lear.

The day-long celebration held in September 1999 included various entertainment, street dance, bonfire

and many of the movie's leading actors. She worked with Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce in order to make the event happen. Van Nostrand said, he too,

got involved with a variety of organizations, noting in particular his membership with the Adair County Pork Producers.

"Living in Iowa, which is a big agricultural state, membership in this association helped me learn more about agriculture, legal issues about agriculture, farmers and hogs," he said.

Born in Leon, Iowa, Van Nostrand's family moved to Sterling, Colo., when he was 6 years old. He graduated from Sterling High School and Northeastern Junior College, also in Sterling. He majored in journalism and earned an associate's degree.

Taking the advise and encouragement of instructors from high school and college, Van Nostrand began his career in June 1993 as a reporter with the *Flagler News*, a weekly publication in Flagler, Colo.

In March 1996, he accepted a position at a larger weekly newspaper in Windsor, Colo. In July 1998, he was named managing editor of the *Adair County Free Press* in Greenfield.

"The move to Greenfield was more of a personal move rather than a career one," he said. He and Jen-

nifer moved to Iowa to start a family. They have two children, Grant, 4, and Kari, 3.

In January, John was inspired to purchase a newspaper after reading an article in the National Newspaper Association's newsletter about a man who purchased a weekly newspaper in Minnesota. However, after careful thought and research into financing, John decided he wasn't quite ready for that step.

Still, the outcome was positive.

Van Nostrand said while looking into buying a newspaper, he discovered an opening for a publisher in northwest Kansas. After meeting with Tom Dreiling, the former *Free Press* publisher, and Steve and Cynthia Haynes, owners of Nor'-West Newspapers, he accepted the position.

He said he is excited to be in Colby and looks forward to meeting people in town and around the area.

"I like small-town journalism," he said. "It's the only level of media that I believe people still have some respect for."

Van Nostrand can be reached at (785) 462-3963 or email: jvannostrand@nwkansas.com.

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie clinics team up, hire two new physicians

By JAN KATZ ACKERMAN

Colby Free Press

Three medical clinics have formed a cooperative and attracted two doctors to the area.

New Frontiers Health Services, Oakley, along with Hoxie Medical Clinic and Family Center for Healthcare, Colby, have taken proactive steps to have doctors on staff.

"We are really happy to have assigned Dr. Ratchnee France," said Doris Reed, Oakley's clinic manager. "It should help quite a bit with

patient load and with call coverage."

France, and her husband, Dr. John France, will be moving from Roswell, New Mexico, early next year. The couple, along with their two daughters, 13 and 10, will live in Oakley.

"This family has been in the military and had different living arrangements all their lives," said Colby's clinic manager Scott Focke. "They've had living arrangements not normal to northwest Kan-

sas." While the doctors will reside in Oakley, Dr. Ratchnee France will work in Oakley four days a week and in Colby one day each week. Podiatry surgeries will be performed at Citizens Medical Center in Colby. Dr. John France will work in Hoxie five days per week, and will actually live in Hoxie two weeks per month when he's on call 24 hours per day.

In addition to his clinic work, Dr. John France will service the hospital and long-care facility at Sheri-

dan County Health Complex.

"We tried to come up with a schedule that will allow them to be together as much as possible, but fill the needs of the communities they will be working in," Focke said.

Both in the Army since the mid-1990s, Dr. Ratchnee France will bring to the area her skills in obstetrics, as well as in podiatry. She is certified in trauma, neonatal, pediatric and cardiac life support, as well as podiatric surgery, including laser surgery. The doctor obtained

her premedical education at Khon Kaen University in Thailand, her medical degree at Temple University, Philadelphia, Penn., and at SABA University School of Medicine, Netherlands-Antilles.

Dr. John France will bring to the area his educational background of physical chemistry and his skills in family practice, having worked in industrial rehabilitation.

He earned his bachelor's degree at Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio; his doctorate degree in chem-

istry at the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Penn.; and his medical degree at the University of Missouri at Columbia.

According to Focke, in addition to her duties in Oakley, Dr. Ratchnee France will conduct podiatry outreach clinics in area towns such as Goodland and St. Francis.

"Part of what appealed to Dr. John and Dr. Ratchnee is that they

See "NEW DOCS," page 3

