



COLBY FREE PRESS

Top 10 stories in Thomas County

Pediatrician, sheriff and voting make list

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Thomas County and its residents had an eventful year in 2005.

In no particular order, presented below are the top 10 stories for Thomas County in 2005.

1. **Voting consolidation.** The Thomas County commissioners approved consolidating polling places at their Wednesday, Dec. 1 meeting. The matter had been discussed all year because it was a federal mandate that states comply with the Help Americans Vote Act.

It cost \$69,000 to buy the voting machines, and voting locations will be consolidated to three places around the county.

Residents of Brewster, West Hale and Kingery Townships will continue to vote at Brewster City Hall; Rexford, Menlo, and Smith and Wendell Township residents will still vote at Rexford City Hall.

All other townships and wards will vote at the Colby Community Building.

2. **Dr. Raymond Ketting leaving the community.** After 10 years serving patients in the around the area as a pediatrician,



Mike Baughn



Dr. R. Ketting

Ketting announced late in 2005 he was leaving Colby Medical and Surgical Center and Citizens Medical Center, where he was chief of staff.

Ketting will be going to Poplar Bluff Regional Medical Center in Missouri

3. **Sheriff's attempted suicide.** Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn attempted suicide on Oct. 27 while attending the state sheriff's conference in Junction City.

Baughn stabbed himself in the abdomen with a knife, and was taken to a hospital where he was treated and released.

He apologized to family and friends, as well as the county commissioners and voters, several days after the incident, and re-

turned to work.

4. **Courthouse clock tower gets repaired.** This summer, the clock tower at the Thomas County Courthouse received much-needed repairs. After taking a trip up in spring 2005, the commissioners gave permission to see how much it would cost to repair the clock.

The wood rings holding up the clock faces were rotting, and daylight was visible in many places.

The clock faces were repaired with metal rings and caulking, and the old wooden clock hands were replaced with aluminum hands.

One set of hands will eventually go on display at the courthouse, and another pair was donated to the Prairie Museum of Art and History.

5. **All-School Reunion, concert.** The ninth annual Colby All-School reunion was held in August, bringing more than 1,100 alumni to the event.

The weekend included an assembly at the Colby Community Building, a display on "High Flying Eagles" at the Prairie Museum of Art and History, a barbecue and various class gatherings.

Before the reunion, Colby High School alumnus Mark Schultz, a Christian adult contemporary music artist, gave his first concert in his former hometown. Schultz stayed in town for the reunion, which will happen again in 2010.

6. **Busy year for school district/board.** In 2005, the Colby School District faced some challenges, along with a few positive occurrences.

This summer, the board didn't renew the contract of head high school girls basketball coach Tom Beckman, and later hired head boys coach Bissitt to coach the girls team also.

The end of the first semester also saw the board choose not to renew the contract of activities director Jeff Quenzer.

The high school got a new principal, Rocky Robbins, who is in his first years principal, and also saw the opening of Thomas County Academy, the district's charter school, which just completed its first semester of operation.

7. **Wheat/fall harvests better than in past years.** Area farmers reported better harvests in 2005 than in the past several years. Drought over the past five previous

years resulted in poor quality and yields.

2005 saw a good harvest, both wheat and fall crops. Area agronomist Brian Olsen said compared to good years, 2005 would be "average," but compared to other years, it was above expected.

8. **Colby Kansas Army National Guard Unit.** The Guard had an exceptionally busy year, with call-ups and other activities, including hosting the state's Enlisted Conference in March, as well as celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Guard.

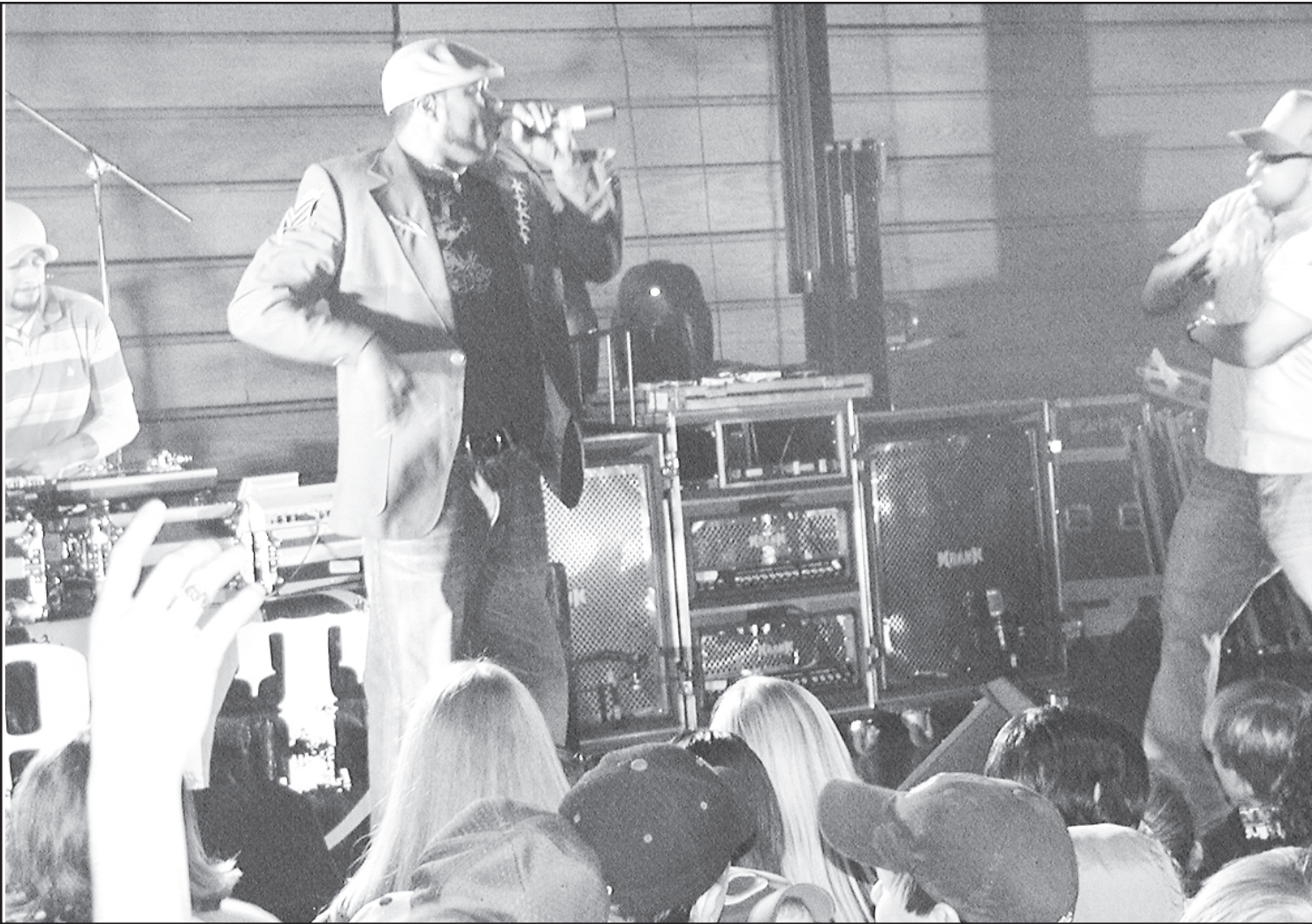
Renovations on the Colby Armory started in the fall, and once completed, will improve the appearance of the building and upgrade facilities.

9. **Truck Town/Wal-Mart.** Truck Town, a new business, had its building completed and the business opened in late 2005.

Construction on the new Wal-Mart Supercenter also started, and both are visible examples of how the community and county are both doing well economically.

10. **Gov. Kathleen Sebelius visits.** In July, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius made a stop in Colby during a tour of the state. The governor attended a luncheon at the college where she addressed many issues.

Rappin' and Rockin'



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

ABOVE: Christian hip-hop group Grits performed to a packed house at the Colby Community Building New Year's Eve. More than 800 youth showed up to the event, which included all-night activities around Colby, like basketball, movies, video games,

pizza and 'Fear Factor.' **BELOW LEFT:** County Attorney Andrea Wyrick performed with the band Out of Nowhere, which is from Levant Community Church. **BELOW RIGHT:** Crowd surfing was part of the fun at the New Year's Eve concert.



Neighboring county to give away 19 lots

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A project to give away free land in Hoxie has taken another step forward with the development of guidelines.

According to Hoxie City Attorney Ken Eland, people wanting a chance any of the 19 lots must file an application with the city. Anyone who is a resident of Hoxie or Sheridan County, or anyone who wants to live in Hoxie, will be eligible for one of the free lots.

"Basically the agreement will be filed with the city then be forwarded to the city commissioners," Eland said on Wednesday.

Earlier this year a group of investors known as the Hoxie Development Company disbanded after nearly 46 years of operation. Left in the wake of the company's end are 19 lots in northeast Hoxie. The group donated the lots to the city as a way to lure new homes owners to an area from 14th and Noble Streets to 17th and King Streets. Located just north of the development known as Wheatridge, the new development area will come under covenants established in 1959.

Those covenants are outlined in the project's application which will soon be available at Hoxie's city office located at 1024 Royal Ave.

Anyone approved for a lot must agree to begin construction within six months and complete a home within 18 months. All homes must be single family dwellings not less than 800 square feet on the ground floor, excluding open porches or attached garages. And homes can be no larger than two and one-half stories tall. No mobile or manufactured homes will be allowed; however, modular homes on permanent foundations will be allowed.

All construction must comply with street easements and setbacks,

nuisance controls, and bans on temporary structures and oil and mining operations as listed in the covenants. The city also bans change of use of the property from residential to church or school, and restricts the land from being used for recreational purposes.

All of the covenants were subject to an initial term of 25 years, 1959 to 1984, and have since been automatically renewed for 10 years at a time.

According to the application form, there is a required \$500 fee designated to pay for legal expenses. Applicants must also obtain title insurance for a general warranty deed the city will issue. And the city retains the right to reject any and all applications if a good faith intent to obtain ownership and construction of a home can not be proven.

Applicants wanting to build a home larger than will fit on a single lot can apply for multiple lots. The city will decide on a case by case basis based on the size of the home and proposed location of it.

The city will pay the property taxes on all lots until such time property is conveyed to its new owner.

Hoxie is now one of a growing list of communities with land to give away.

The cities of Atwood, Plainville, Lincoln, Minneapolis, Washington, Wilson, Ellsworth, Kanopolis, Marquette, Holyrood, Eureka and Chetopa have similar promotions for residential property. Stockton, Lincoln and Washington have commercial property to be given away.

In fact, an entire Web site has been established to help market the promotions in those areas. Visit that Web site at www.kansasfreeland.com To learn more about the free land call City Clerk Kelly Smith at (785) 675-3291.

Committee disbanded

WICHITA (AP) — A committee of lawmakers who generally supported issues raised by black and Hispanic leaders has been disbanded, causing concern among some minority leaders.

Legislative leaders said they eliminated the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee, which helped bring into law a bill banning racial profiling, to improve efficiency.

House Speaker Doug Mays, R-Topeka, said the committee passed so many bills that it flooded the Senate Judiciary Committee with work. And House Minority Leader Dennis McKinney, D-Greensburg, said he also was concerned about the judiciary committee's heavy workload. "What it boils down to is that

some of these issues that are important; we need to make sure the chairman of the judiciary committee gives them time," he said.

"The less important civil law matters will have to be set aside or delayed."

The Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee, often called "Kids and Courts," studied such issues as keeping incarcerated girls in contact with their mothers, as well as hearing debate on the death penalty and the increasing number of prison beds in the state.

And it heard the racial profiling bill, which made it illegal for law enforcement to target motorists based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, gender or religious dress.