



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Sheriff attends stress seminar

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn was one of 138 local, state and federal law enforcement officers from across the United States at "Traumas of Law Enforcement" training in Colorado this week.



M. Baughn

The training in Littleton, Colo., was presented by Concerns of Police Survivors, also known as C.O.P.S., which is supported by a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant.

"The training provided me with a new understanding of issues relating to trauma, stress, line-of-duty death, officer suicide, injury and disability," Baughn said. "The knowledge I gained at the training will help me assist officers, their families and survivors to cope with the many critical incidents that affect us in our law enforcement duties."

Baughn's office has not been immune to issues presented at the training. The September 2005 suicide of Deputy Cory Wang, as well as Baughn's attempted suicide in October marked his office with tragedy and stress.

"I wish, in retrospect, this training would have been available, or I would have known of it sooner, and some of this trauma could have been avoided," Baughn.

Baughn said presenters at the training were Suzie Sawyer, executive directors of C.O.P.S.; James M. Horn, a retired FBI agent and current director of James M. Horn & Associates; Robert E. Douglas, Jr., executive director of the National P.O.L.I.C.E. Suicide Foundation; and Mike Buckingham, a disabled Washington State Highway Patrol Trooper.

Topics covered during the training were myths of law enforcement, police victimization, death notification procedures, support services to surviving families, agency preparation, the traumatized officer, police suicide and surviving traumatic incidents, disabilities and living after such traumas.

"If all goes well I'll attend the Police Suicide Awareness Train the Trainer seminar Sept. 18 to 20 in Linthicum, Maryland," Baughn said.



Sporting a new do are (l to r), Josh Elliott, assistant city recreation director; Robert Lee, maintenance worker; Larry Dilts, head maintenance; and Ryan Sturdy, director of the Colby Community Building, municipal pool and city recreation.

PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Heads up! Is it cue balls? Nope, it's the city guys

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Four community building employees are shining examples of what it takes to work in their field.

Each of them is sporting the bald look and proud of it.

For years, Ryan Sturdy, director of the community building, municipal pool and city recre-

ation, said he has shaved his head. Then when Larry Dilts, head maintenance worker, came aboard, he too chose the shaved-head look.

Not to be outdone, Robert Lee, maintenance worker, who has been employed at the community building since September 2005, decided to give it a try and discovered his wife liked the change.

The newest kid on the block, Josh

Elliott, the assistant recreation director, ended up taking the plunge last week.

"This started out as a joke," Sturdy said, "and has escalated from there. The guys have been taking a lot of ribbing as well from morning walkers and others," Sturdy said.

Comments dealing with cue balls and other references to being bald

have been circulating.

One reason the four agreed to go public with their look; however, was because the newest employee, Elliott, decided he is going to grow his hair out.

"We know the jokes are all in good fun," Sturdy said. "And as for the other employees — they agree that the attention has been enjoyable."

Barbershop Chorus performs Saturday

The Tumbleweed Barbershop Chorus is celebrating its 25th anniversary Saturday with its "Riverboat Cruise."

Performances will be at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. in Frahm Theater at the Colby Community College Cultural Arts Center. The stage will be set as a mock paddlewheel river boat and the chorus members will portray deck hands, passengers, gamblers and more.

Two guest quartets will accompany the chorus, 12th Street Rag

and U.S. Male of Sterling, Colo. The Colby quartet Lasting Impressions will also perform.

Chorus director Don Kready, former chorus directors Vaughn Lippoldt and Mike Linden and former chorus members will also be part of the performance.

The chorus received its charter in Oct., 1980, and was sponsored by The Prairie Statesmen of McCook

The group gave its charter show Oct. 18, 1980 with Vaughn Lippoldt directing, and performed songs

such as "Give Me that Barbershop Style," "Down South," "I Want A Girl" and "What A Country."

Fred McCreary, president of the Tumbleweed Chorus, accepted the charter. Bruce Frahm shared some of his memories of the history of the chapter. He said the group's induction show as at the Colby Community Building and later moved to the college's Cultural Arts Center.

The director in the beginning was Lippoldt, who also was the col-

lege's vocal music instructor.

Frahm said through the years the chorus has maintained its attendance, settled into a routine with performances.

They also accomplished a service project during their early years — buying practice light fixtures for the Cultural Arts Center stage at the college.

Tickets are still available at the door for both performances. For information, call 462-2474, 460-6552 or 1-800-279-8208.

Newer sewer



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

A crew from Midlands Construction of Kearney, Neb., worked this week to bore under U.S. Highway 24. The crew is under contract for the city of Colby to lay pipe for the city's sewer main project.

State gets 'F' in mental health care

WICHITA (AP) — The National Alliance on Mental Illness has given Kansas an "F" for its public health care services for people with severe mental illnesses.

Its first state-by-state analysis focuses on public mental health care services available for people with low incomes and serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, bipolar illness and major depression.

About 20 percent of people have mental health problems at some point in their lives, said Gerry Lichti, president of the Kansas chapter of the alliance, a grass-roots mental health organization.

Most get treatment and get on with their lives, but others need more intensive care throughout their lives. Lichti's own family has struggled to find the right services for their son, who as a teen spent time in one of Kansas' now-closed state mental hospitals.

Lichti said he hopes the report will be "a kick in the pants" to continue with reform efforts.

It comes just months after the convictions of Arlan and Linda

"The report is not necessarily a bad thing if it helps us focus accurately on the needs of people." — Tom Pletcher, director

Kaufman for involuntary servitude and fraud related to the abuse of the mentally ill residents of their Newton group home.

That trial and the new report "are not necessarily a bad thing, if it helps us focus accurately on the needs of people," said Tom Pletcher, director of clinical services for Comcare of Sedgwick County.

Mental health care providers agreed in part with the report but took issue with some of it. "We're concerned that NAMI may not have had all the information to issue an accurate report card," said Mike Hammond, executive director of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas. "But in fairness, there's some things we agree with."

He said the report rightly gives high marks to Kansas for not re-

stricting medications used in publicly funded programs. Also accurate, he said, are low marks for access to hospitalization for mental illness and for development of a mental health care work force.

But the report wrongly penalized Kansas for a lack of jail diversion programs, Hammond said, because mental health centers across the state participate in such programs.

In the area of infrastructure — which included things like insurance parity for mental illness — the state received an "F." It also received an "F" for information access, which judged how easily people were able to find out about services.

In the area of services — such as medication access and reduced use of restraints — it received a "D-minus. Eight states were graded with an "F."

Wireless carrier opens

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Nex-Tech Wireless has expanded to northwest Kansas.

Chief Executive Officer and General Manager Johnnie Johnson of Hays said S&T Communications and North West Wireless in Colby are both Nex-Tech wireless agents.

S&T in Brewster, Goodland and Dighton are also carriers and are among 24 other Nex-Tech locations around the area.

Nex-Tech Wireless started operation Oct. 15, 2005.

"We launched our service to fill a void," he said.

Nex-Tech opened cell sites in communities with 300 or more people, and Johnson said they want to provide the best customer service and coverage they can.

"This was a very good opportunity for Nex-Tech Wireless," Johnson said.

The company has an agreement with Sprint. It uses Sprint coverage for its national plans, and anyone on Sprint traveling across Kansas will still have phone service thanks to Nex-Tech.

Johnson said they have national plans covering all 50 states, six-state regional plans, local and pre-paid plans. The pre-paid plans are one of the fastest growing areas in wireless.

He said the Free 2 Go pre-paid plan is ideal for people who do not want to deal with a long-term contract.

Besides local wireless coverage and customer service, Johnson said people in this area will now have access to the latest in mobile technology.

Data services, such as downloading of ringtones and wallpapers, camera phones and more are all accessible.

Nex-Tech also have a service where customers can access 27 television channels on their handset. Channels like CNN, MSNBC, sports, cartoons and more are viewable.

"Sometimes rural areas don't have immediate access to the latest technology and we wanted to change that. Wireless is one of the fastest growing industries that's currently out there," Johnson said.

Nex-Tech is building a new facility by the Hays airport, and they will be bringing 75 new jobs to the area over the next year.

Nex-Tech is owned by three companies — Rural Telephone in Lenora, Mutual Telephone in Little River and Golden Belt Telephone in Rush Center.