



COLBY FREE PRESS

Generator ready for emergencies

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Thomas County Emergency Management Director Jim Engel told county commissioners a new 100,000 watt generator is ready to be fueled.

Engel asked commissioners Ron Evans, Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen Friday how he was to pay for 100 gallons of blended diesel from J & J Oil.

“You’ll need more than \$500 for the fuel,” Christiansen said.

Bob Luck of J & J Oil said the cost of blended diesel per gallon on Friday would run the county \$2.27 per gallon. That price includes diesel plus an additive needed to make the fuel more lubricated.

Engel said the new generator can be programmed to “exercise itself” any way the county sees needed.

“We can program it to run for 15 minutes every week or so,” Engel said about keeping the machine in operational order. The generator will be located on the west side of the county’s office complex on Range Avenue.

Engel also told commissioners the need for people using the complex meeting room to realize county officials had priority use of the room should a disaster arise.

“If we need to activate the Emergency Operation Command in case of a disaster the Emergency Management has priority to the room,” Engel said.

“That’s a no brainer,” Evans replied.

In other business: Road and Bridge Supervisor Clair Schrock submitted an update to the county’s five year road plan.

“After we get the Willow Street project done the Levant project will be next in line,” Schrock said. Thomas County’s road and bridge department maintains 120 miles of asphalt roads and 286 miles of gravel roads. Maintenance for the

roads is done on a basis covered by the five year plan.

Schrock also talked with the commissioners about repairs for the asphalt recycler. He said Cheyenne County’s road and bridge department shares the recycler and has agreed to share in the cost of getting it repaired.

Schrock said he researched repairing the recycler and costs were about \$13,000 for a rebuilt engine or \$200,000 for a new piece of equipment.

“I lean towards the \$13,000 fix rather than the other one,” Steele said.

- Landfill Supervisor Larry Jumper submitted a report on repairs made to landfill equipment at Martin Tractor Company totaling \$85,000 for the 10-year period since 1996.

- County Appraiser Mary Cech told commissioners her office had mailed property tax valuations on about 7,000 parcels.

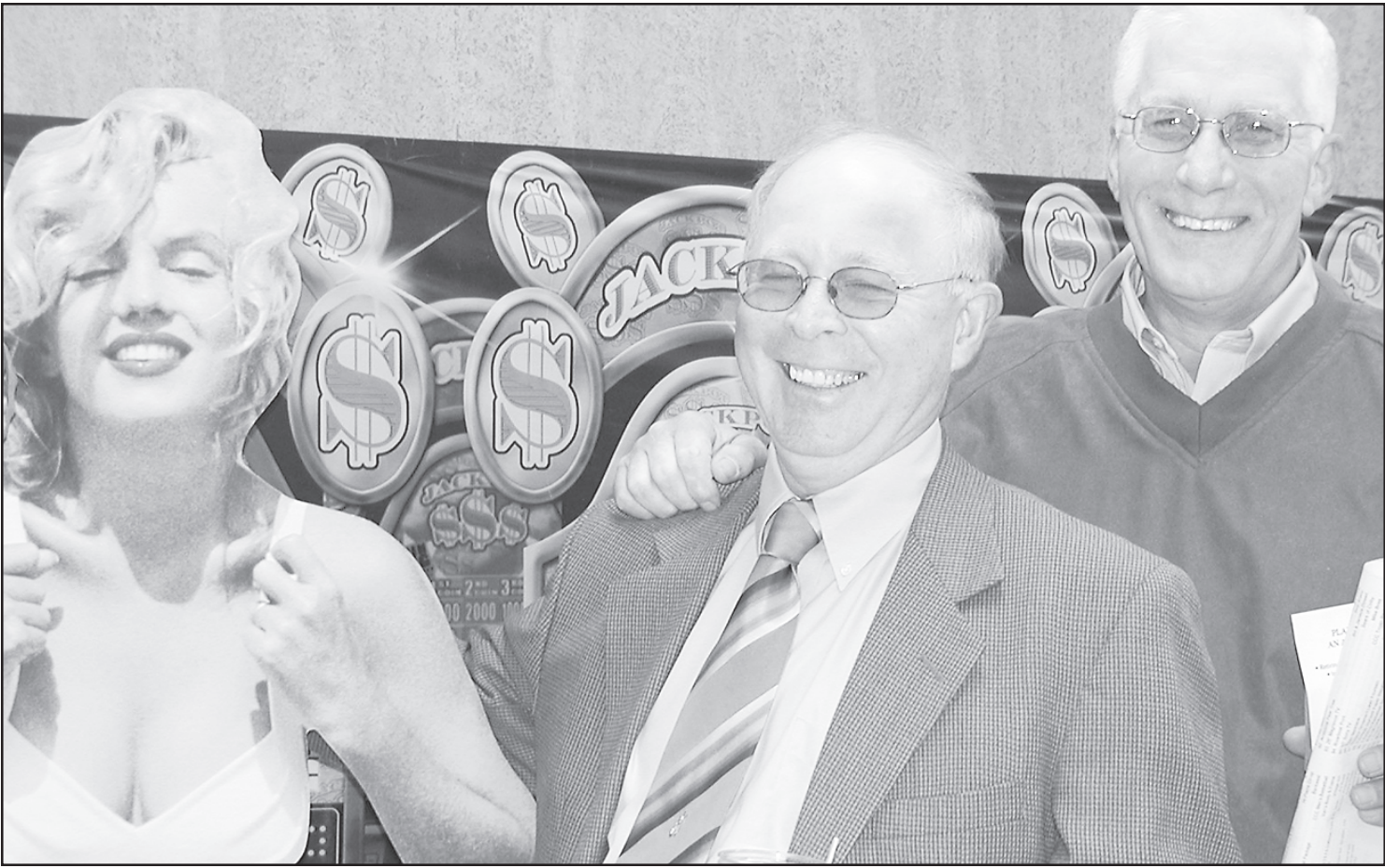
- Approval of a contract with Airgas Mid South Inc. for 10 oxygen bottles and oxygen for \$1,700 on a 10-year lease agreement.

- Approval of Resolution 2006-2008 adopting the Northwest Kansas Solid Waste Planning Authority solid waste management plan.

- Approval of the Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative (workman’s comprehensive insurance) premium of \$43,334, of which \$37,709 has been paid and the balance of \$5,625 is now due. This is a premium audit adjustment for Jan. 1, 2005 to Jan. 1, 2006.

- Approval of the March 20 minutes, payroll and second half of March accounts payable; purchase of a desk for the clerk’s office in the amount of \$1,852 from Office Works; and copier maintenance agreement for the emergency medical service department.

- Tabled items included purchase of folding chairs for the county commission room.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press



A gala event

The stars were out in full force during the annual Colby Community College Endowment Association’s dinner party Saturday at the Comfort Inn Convention Center. **ABOVE:** Buddy Van Horn and Jim Cousins of Colby posed with a cut-out of Marilyn Monroe, at the Las Vegas extravaganza. It was not a record-breaking year for the endowment association’s event, but everyone had a great time, said Nick Wells, director. Preliminary estimates are about \$55,000. **LEFT:** Colby Community College cheerleaders Kelly Garner, left, Krystal Lee and Amy Wheelbarger, provided some of the entertainment.

Politics of governor’s race contributes to Senate’s failure

TOPEKA (AP) — Politics haunted the Senate’s debate over education funding last week, contributing to senators’ failure to approve a plan for increasing aid to public schools.

The debate gave Sen. Jim Barnett, of Emporia, a chance to showcase a key part of his platform in his campaign for the Republican nomination for governor, a plan to phase in a \$495 million increase in spending on schools over four years. A majority of Republicans seemed willing to help him by backing the plan.

But Democrats weren’t about to help

Barnett, and most of them favored a three-year, \$633 million plan approved by the House and endorsed by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat seeking her second term this year. Not surprisingly, few Republicans joined them.

Caught in the crossfire was a bill containing a three-year, \$724 million plan, a modified version of one drafted by Senate leaders of both parties, a bipartisan measure without enough bipartisan support to pass.

The Senate’s failure to approve a plan left the school finance debate in disarray as legislators began their annual spring break,

significantly slowed and complicated efforts to deal with Kansas Supreme Court mandates and increased the odds of a special session this summer.

“It was all gubernatorial politics,” said Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Jean Schodorf, R-Wichita.

In the Supreme Court’s view, as expressed in past orders, politics aren’t supposed to determine what schools receive. The court ruled last year that legislators had failed to live up to their constitutional duty to provide adequate funds and to distribute the money fairly.

Legislators increased aid by \$290 million, more than 10 percent, past \$3 billion a year. The court said the increases were acceptable “for interim purposes,” and lawmakers commissioned a study to guide this year’s work. Released in January, it said the state need to spend at least \$400 million more a year.

It’s not unusual for a governor’s race to become part of the legislative dynamic on many issues. Allies want to burnish an incumbent’s record, while opponents hope forcing some issues to a vote or blocking legislation will create political problems.

But Barnett’s candidacy makes the influence of politics more intense in the Senate.

As a candidate, Barnett must demonstrate to voters that he’s a credible alternative to Sebelius and show them that electing him will make a significant difference in setting policy. (There is a danger here in treating Barnett as the presumed GOP nominee when he’s in a crowded primary race. His five announced opponents include former House Speaker Robin Jennison of Healy and Ken Canfield, founder of the National Center for Fathering, Overland Park.)

Big Brothers, Sisters raise \$20,000

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

More than 100 people took part in the sixth annual Thomas County Big Brothers Big Sisters “Bowl for Kids’ Sake” Saturday and Sunday at Colby Bowl.

Donna Jennings, secretary, said the organization, which matches adults and children together for mentoring, had hoped to raise \$20,000 through pledges and corporate sponsorships.

“We didn’t quite hit our goal this year, but we came close,” she said.

Even though the total was down from last year Jennings said the group is planning a second big fundraising event in the fall.

In addition to needing volunteers to help with fundraising, Jennings said the organization could use four more board mem-

bers. Ray Duffey and Deb Tittel recently went off the board after serving more than one term. The current four members include Angie Moore, president; Vicki Beiser; Terry Gotchall, vice president; and Jennings.

“Anybody interested is encouraged to call any of the board members,” Jennings said. “We are a working board and looking for philanthropic-minded people who care about kids and community programs.”

Someone with grant-writing experience would also benefit the board. Big Brothers Big Sisters operates on grant money, fundraising events and sponsorships.

Jennings is in her second term as a board member.

Currently the organization has matched 13 “littles” with “bigs,” and there is at least that many still waiting, said Case Manager Theresa Gotchall, who also is the

interim director. One reason for the wait on some “littles” is due to the lack of men volunteers to match up with boys.

Since its inception in March 2000, Thomas County’s Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter has had its ups and downs, but throughout it all, the board, volunteers, bigs and littles remain positive and encouraged about the future.

“Everyone, at all levels, is passionate about the kids,” Jennings said.

“One year ago, the group had a negative balance forcing the board to borrow \$10,000 from the Wichita office. “It was touch and go,” she said, “but because of everyone’s dedication, the organization pulled itself out of the hole and still continues operating in the black.”

Jennings urges anyone who wants to help Big Brothers Big Sisters program, should call 460-9125, or stop by 1960 W. Fourth St.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Big Sister Kelly Dewey, left, and Little Sister Ashley Wahrman, are the longest match in the Thomas County chapter, having been together since October of 2000. “We are like perfect sisters,” Dewey said.

Wreck kills two near Brewster

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

A wreck on Interstate-70 early today claimed at least one life, according to Kansas Highway Patrol.

The accident investigation and report were still being worked on at press time today.

The wreck took place at mile marker 40 in Thomas County, and the highway patrol and Brewster Fire Department responded.

Dispatch said they didn’t yet have all the information on the accident, and were trying to identify the driver.

More information on the wreck will appear in Wednesday’s *Colby Free Press*.