



# COLBY FREE PRESS

12 pages

## Stirring things up



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Brooklyn Bange stirred sausage gravy during a cooking class Wednesday at Colby United Methodist Church. The class is one of many being offered as part of the Summer Youth Program at the church. The cooking class program is being taught on a ro-

tating basis by cooks from Prairie Senior Living Complex. Cook Juanita Singh said this week, students were cooking a breakfast menu of scrambled eggs, biscuits, gravy and fruit smoothies.

## City tackles parking woes

By Patty Decker  
Free Press Editor

Some Colby residents have started parking vehicles on the grass in their front yard instead of on the street prompting concern by Colby City Council members.

"The most noticeable area is along West Fourth Street from Range going west," said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong during Tuesday's council meeting. "However, there are a lot more areas than just that one."

In reviewing the zoning regulations, Armstrong said the issue is not adequately addressed stating that in an R-1 (residential area), the parking regulation provides for off-street parking space for a dwelling.

"The definition for a parking space is a permanent surfaced area, enclosed or unenclosed, sufficient in size to store one automobile, together with a permanent surfaced driveway connecting the parking space with a street or alley..." according to the regulation.

Because there is no definition of a permanent surfaced area in the regulations, some residents could interpret that as a gravel, sand or even solid concrete covering for the entire yard. While the council could prohibit people from parking on grass areas, the problem is with the permanent surface area.

Under the regulations now, someone with a concrete area in front of their home could legally park 16 cars in their front yard if they have enough room.

"It's unbelievable where people

are parking cars around town," said Councilman Jim Tubbs. "I am seeing three vehicles in some front yards with motor homes on the streets and areas where a person can't even drive down an alley."

Council members agreed with Armstrong that a front yard should be landscaped with appropriately sized driveways.

"This will require a lot of thought to change the guidelines," she said.

The council, by consensus, instructed Armstrong to send the matter to the planning commission for review and recommendations.

In other council news...

Council also approved requesting bids for 2006 street improvement projects submitted by Marc Gilman, public utilities director.

Gilman provided council with a list of streets needing repaving; less than one-half mile of Hill Street; about six-tenths of a mile on Court Avenue, Court Place and Court Terrace; 1.7 miles at Thielen Avenue; 1.5 miles on Zelfer Avenue; three miles on Harvey Avenue and Harvey Court and almost one mile on Terrace Drive.

The preliminary estimate for the project is about \$494,000 with about \$585,000 in the budget to complete the work.

Since this project will use most of the money in the budget, Armstrong told the council, it might be about three years before another major project could be done.

"Our normal budget is \$160,000 in special streets and between \$110,000 to \$140,000 in streets for this type of project," she said.

## Kansas Guardsmen back from Afghanistan

TOPEKA (AP) — Seventeen members of a Kansas Air National Guard unit are back home after six months of duty in Afghanistan, where they were assigned to detain enemy combatants.

The members of the Topeka-based 190th Air Refueling Wing were greeted by scores of relatives and friends after their plane arrived at Forbes Field on Wednesday afternoon.

"He's so thin I barely recognize him," said Janet Peterson, herself a member of the 190th who was not deployed, after she saw her husband, Technical Sgt. Mark Peterson, leave the plane. "He looks good."

The Petersons were married in September, two months before the guard detachment headed over-

seas. They're planning a honeymoon in Mexico soon.

The deployment was the second to Afghanistan for Mark Peterson, 33, of Kansas City, Kan. He said this one was "longer, more stressful and more intense" than the first, but he wanted Americans to know that "a lot of good things are happening" in Afghanistan as the U.S. rebuilds schools and provides humanitarian aid.

The Kansas guard members were involved in a joint operation that included active and reserve members of the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force. Capt. Chris Hill, a spokesman for the 190th, said they detained hundreds of enemy combatants.

## Town reels as drought hurts wheat

KIOWA (AP) — The custom cutters have almost all moved on now. Only a few grain trucks still rattle down Main Street on the way to the elevators. The mood is as somber as the oppressive heat as harvest wraps up in this first Kansas town to cut the drought-plagued 2006 winter wheat crop.

At the OK Co-op Grain Co. grain elevator, general manager Alan Meyers talked about the impact the loss of half of the wheat crop will have on this farming community that has little else to sustain its local economy.

"Something like this hits the town really hard," Meyers said.

The winter wheat crop is worth between \$16 million and \$18 million to the Kiowa area.

"If you have half a crop, you take \$8 million out of the community," he said, adding that the amount may not sound like a lot of money in city like Wichita, but it really hurts a small town like Kiowa.

**"If you have half a crop, you take \$8 million out of the community."**

Alan Meyers,  
OK Co-op Grain general manager

Meyers anticipated the local harvest will wind up with 1.5 million or 1.6 million bushels — far short of the 3.5 million bushels his seven elevators in the area normally take in.

Folks here already knew it would be bad. This area straddling the Oklahoma-Kansas border has only gotten 1.6 inches of rain, and virtually no snow, since last October. If anything the crop — almost all top quality No. 1 wheat — did better than many expected. Some folks had even feared the area would harvest just a third of a normal crop this

season and are grateful for even half a crop given the lack of rainfall.

OK Co-op usually hires about 50 temporary employees — mostly high school and college students — to help out during the five or six weeks of harvest. This season Meyers hired just 30 of them.

The elevator was already one permanent staffer short, and now Meyers is considering laying off another one or two more workers.

"It is hard to let longtime, permanent employees go," he said.

At another OK Co-op elevator in town, Charley Brattin, 19, was

happy to have a job to come home to during summer break at Washburn University.

"It is pretty important," he said as he waited for the next grain truck to arrive. "It helps me with paying for college, paying for rent."

During harvest Brattin worked between 14 and 16 hours at the elevator, sweeping spilled grain into the bins and running some of the equipment.

Usually it is a lot busier, but because of the short crop the elevator has been closing at 11 p.m. rather than the usual 1 a.m.

Kiowa farmer Bob Schrock said most of his wheat fields yielded only 20 or so bushels per acre, about half of normal yields. The higher wheat prices and crop insurance will help offset some, but not all, of his losses. He will borrow from his equity to keep farming.

"With crop insurance, it will be a bill-paying year — no profit," Schrock said.

## Fair board considers changing rules on free admission

By Tisha Cox  
Colby Free Press

Control over access to the behind-the-scenes at the fairgrounds was a hot topic at the Thomas County Fair Board's meeting Thursday.

The issue came up during a discussion allowing Logan County's drill team to perform at the fair rodeo. Last year, the board let all of the group members and their families into the rodeo for free.

However, this year, they want better control over who is allowed into the stands, infield and events for free.

The board approved letting the drill team perform during both rodeos this year. Drill team members will receive two tickets to the rodeo. Board secretary Audrey Hines will send a letter to the group, explaining the change.

The board also talked about how much access rodeo contestants should have to the grounds. Board member Marty Crampton said he wants all contestants parked inside the fence that surrounds the grandstands and arena. If someone parks outside the fence, they should have to pay to get into the rodeo.

Crampton said the board should reviews

### Kiwanis to sponsor July 4 fireworks

During its meeting Thursday, the Thomas County Fair Board approved a request from the Kiwanis Club to sponsor the annual Fourth of July fireworks display at the fairgrounds.

Kiwanis Club member and Colby Fire Department assistant chief Rick Dickman said the show will begin at 10:15 p.m. July 4.

He told the board he has all the paperwork for the insurance for the display, which includes a \$1 million liability policy.

The fireworks display won't be the only event at the fairgrounds July 4.

The High Plains Lions Club is celebrating its 35th anniversary with a free hot dog feed at the 4-H Building. The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce is planning other activities.

the issue before the July meeting.

Board member Mark Anderson agreed with control.

"We need to decide where we want them



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

From left to right: Fairgrounds groundskeeper Ron Kogler; Thomas County Fair Board members Daryl Dible, Marty Crampton, Nancy Rundel, Cynthia Bieberle and Bill Shields listened during a discussion on the fair rodeo Thursday.

to be," he said. "It's reasonable to want to be able to control access."

Board member Bill Shields said the fair board only wants to control access, like during races or the Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass festival.

The board also talked about its contract with Colby Community College to allow its rodeo team to use the fairgrounds for prac-

tice. Board president Stan Strange said the county commissioner returned the contract to the fair board. He said commissioner Ron Evans had concerns about the contract because it had nothing dealing with no alcohol being allowed at the fairgrounds.

"I expected the commissioners here tonight," Strange said. "They have addressed the issue on the grounds by putting up signs

that say no alcohol is allowed on the premises." He said if the stipulation is put into the college contract, all of the board's contracts will also have to be changed.

"We can't single out just the college," Strange said.

Crampton said the board wasn't singling out the college.

"We didn't single it out — the commissioners did," he said.

Crampton said the board will need direction on what to do if the rule is violated. The matter was tabled until the July meeting and the commissioners will be asked to attend.

In other fair board news...

• Kerry Wark of the Thomas County Amusement Association discussed getting permission to get bids for a concrete pad and building. The board approved the request.

He said the concrete would be used for the game tent during the carnival this year. Next year the tent would be replaced by a permanent structure. The building would be a steel shed with overhead doors.

• Approved a request by the Friends of Pioneer Memorial Library to display photos from its "A Day in the Life of Thomas County" collection in the Clover Cafe during the fair.