



COLBY FREE PRESS

'Look at me, look at me'



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Learning how to get into the water at the Colby Swimming Pool was just one of many things learned from this week at swimming lessons. Lifeguard Shannon Oard, far right, talked Nathan Brown, left, Tad Holm, and Shane Weis, right, how to dive into the pool.

State offers insurance class

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Kansas Insurance Department is helping to launch a national insurance education program.

Bob Tomlinson, assistant insurance commissioner with the Kansas Insurance Department, was in Colby Thursday to unveil one aspect of the program.

"Everyone in the U.S. would be better off and have cheaper insurance rates if everyone knew what it was and how it works," Tomlinson said.

The four-hour curriculum covers health, home, life and auto insurance information for four different groups: young singles, young families, established families and couples whose children have grown and left the home, who he called empty nesters, and seniors.

During Tomlinson's tour of the state he has been focusing on the empty nesters and seniors aspect of the program.

He said there have been changes in insurance, and they want to let people know about them.

He said the curriculum has been well-received so far, and people think it's a good idea.

Tomlinson said most people think about auto and home insurance, but he's been emphasizing an interest in health and life insurance. There are discounts and other programs available to seniors, and he wants them to know about them.

He also said they want to educate people on the importance of life insurance, and how it works.

People have asked questions about how Medicare Part D will affect them, and also want to know more about long-term care insurance.

As people live longer lives, the chance increases they will enter a nursing home or assisted living facility, and the insurance makes sure they have the resources they need to pay for it, Tomlinson said.

More and more experts are rec-

ommending people buy that type of insurance not to purchase a service, but to protect their assets if they do need long-term care.

He said it will become more and more important if the state puts restrictions on how much money someone is required to spend on care before receiving public assistance.

He also touched briefly on the state's new insurance fraud division. It is one of the few in the U.S. that is a stand-alone agency, and can file cases in all 105 Kansas counties.

Through its efforts, elderly Kansans are encouraged to call and report fraud.

"We will quickly remove the insurance license from anyone that cheats an elderly Kansan," Tomlinson said.

For more information, call the Kansas Insurance Department at 1-800-432-2484.

"We would be pleased to return to any community that thinks this would be a worthwhile program," he said, adding they are also doing some stops that are campaign related also.

Before the week is out, Tomlinson will have traveled to Garden City, Colby, Hays, Salina and Larned.

He was presenting the program in the stead of Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger. She is the vice president of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, which is launching the "Insure U" program.

Kansas is unique, Tomlinson said, in that it is a powerful place when it comes to insurance. It is one of 14 states that elects its insurance commissioner.

Also, the national association's headquarters is in Kansas City. Because of that, he said Kansas serves a prominent role in the association despite its size.

Praeger also will be the next president of the association and of the past four Kansas insurance commissioners, she will be the third to hold that position.

"That really serves to our advantage," Tomlinson said.

For its size, Kansas ranks No. 4 in the nation with the number of insurance companies doing business inside its borders.

Donations needed for family's losses

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A fundraiser dinner is being held to benefit Phyllis and Alan Cheney of Rexford, whose house and barn were severely damaged from last week's thunderstorm.

"Phyllis and Allen had substantial damage to their barn and house

during the storm," said Lyn Cheney. The damage was the result of the June 15 thunderstorm that pummeled the area.

The fund-raising event will begin at 11:30 a.m., Sunday, July 2, at the Community Hall in Rexford and is sponsored by family and friends, she said.

"The menu includes beef and

noodles with all proceeds used to help pay for repairs.

"It was pretty bad damage," said Lyn, who is a cousin.

The farm is eight miles north of Rexford, and she said the damage looked like it had been done by a tornado.

Lyn added it was the worst damage she heard of in the Rexford area

for quite sometime.

Donations may be left at either the Colby, Oberlin, Winona, Atwood, Selden or Oakley branches of *The Bank* or mailed to Cheney Benefit, c/o Lyn Cheney, Rt 2 Box 38, Rexford, Kan. 67753.

For information, call Lyn at (785) 687-8042 or Kay Cheney at 687-4651.

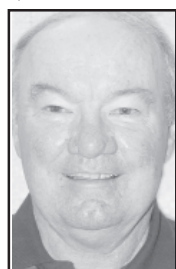
Commissioners review department's cost-saving efforts

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Papers containing blue, black and red numbers kept Thomas County Commissioners busy Monday as they continued with the county's budget process.

Commissioners Ron Evans, Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen poured over numbers department heads submitted to them the past three weeks. The numbers reflect how much money department heads believe



Evans

they need in 2007.

"I'm not asking something for nothing," said Landfill Supervisor Larry Jumper. "What we've accomplished out there has saved the taxpayers a significant amount of money."

Money saved came by landfill staff doing a large amount of the work to open and close the newest solid waste disposal pit. That effort saved about \$200,000.

The commissioners continue to talk about developing an incentive pay process which awards people who have worked for the county a long time. Initial figures of five, 10 and 20 years of longevity have been considered.

"Our real concern is we do it right," Evans said. "There may be some unhappy

campers, but we are trying to do it right."

Steele is undertaking a majority of work for development of the incentive pay schedule. No deadline has been set for the new schedule, but all three commissioners he past several weeks have indicated it would not take place in 2006.

Evans said the commissioners are looking at five key steps as they prepare the 2007 budget.

"We plan to take care of the county employees first, re-evaluate the starting salary of a new employee, look at the incentive pay, find a way to fund a zero to 3 percent to 4 percent annual raise and provide health insurance," he said.

A part of the budget process, the commissioners met with Daniel O'Brien, northwest

area director for the K-State Research and Extension Office in Colby, and Extension board members.

The proposed budget they submitted to the commissioners asks for a 10 percent increase, moving from a county appropriation of \$109,500 to \$119,676 to allow for two county agents. A second figure allowing for three county agents was offered, but that measure would cost \$164,176.

"We've been in the throes of what we pay out county employees and I can tell you it would not be politically viable to appropriate that kind of increase," he said. "If we did, we'd have some kind of revolt."

The two entities talked about several counties trying again to consolidate Extension districts. That idea was quickly dis-

missed by Evans.

"Our position hasn't changed from where we were a year ago," he said of Thomas County's decline to enter a redistricting process.

Extension board member Rhonda Muddloff told commissioners they might rethink their position.

"Part of the thought process was, like school, if you don't consolidate on your own, the state's going to tell you who to consolidate with," she said. "It looks like districting is taking place in your state."

"I guess we'll look at it like another unfunded mandate when that day comes," Evans said.

Steele reiterated the board's position of trying to keep away from raising taxes.

A family affair

The Wagoner Family of Colby sang the John Denver classic "Country Roads" during the Picnic in the Park Thursday at Fike Park. The weekly concert picnic is at noon each Thursday at the park through July 27.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Class aims to increase fitness of disabled

MISSION (AP) — Lee Jones sits on the ground and urges the members of his class of disabled 20-somethings to pull their knees to their chests.

"This really works your abs," said Jones, who has done what few with Down syndrome have achieved and earned a college degree. "It will help you get a six-pack."

Jones, who majored in recreation at what is now Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa, knows how important exercise is for the seven or eight people who show up each week for "Fitness with Lee" at the

Sylvester Powell Jr. Community Center in this Kansas City suburb.

More than half the class shares the challenges of Down syndrome — a chromosomal glitch that causes a range of birth defects, including learning difficulties and an increased likelihood of heart problems and a sluggish thyroid. Others have conditions including cerebral palsy and Asperger syndrome, a milder variant of autism.

"I know some people with Down syndrome can be a bit overweight," the 31-year-old instructor said. "I'm trying to get them to shed off the pounds by taking the class."