



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Volunteerism award goes to former mayor

By **Patty Decker**
Free Press Editor

Colby's former mayor captured the honor of most dedicated volunteer during the 34th Kansas Cavalry Encampment held in June in Wichita.



W. Hixson

Warren Hixson, 67, of Hutchinson who served as Colby mayor for more than 10 years, was nominated for the state award by the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance.

"It was a nice honor and something I really didn't expect," Hixson said.

Hixson resigned as mayor in March.

In addition to Hixson and his wife, Sharon, attending the event, many from the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance were also present.

One of those members, Larry Barrett of Colby, said Gerry Fulwider, economic development director, prepared the nomination forms after the recommendation by the entire board of directors.

"It was great to see Warren recognized by the organization and Gov. (Kathleen) Sebelius for his many years of service to our community and state," Barrett said.

Reasons for Hixson's nomination and selection, according to the governor, hinged on his improvements along the Interstate 70 corridor as

Colby's major economic development while mayor.

In addition, his volunteerism extended to more than 36 boards and committees that he served on over his 30 years in Colby — from president of the League of Kansas Municipalities to chair of Puddle Duck Preschool board.

The volunteer award was sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce. It is given each year to recognize a person who has "gone above and beyond the call of duty," said Caleb Asher, spokesperson with the state's commerce department.

In his remarks at the Wichita event, Asher said Hixson represents the spirit of Kansas volunteers and people in the business community.

Along with Barrett, others from Colby included Fulwider and his wife, Lamoreaux; Steve Richards, president of S&T Communications and his wife, Carolyn and Sheila Frahm of Colby.

Gerry Fulwider said among the many reasons for Hixson's nomination, one thing that stands out is how much he understood economic development and the importance of it in bringing businesses to town.

The current alliance board in Thomas County includes Junelle Hills, chair, with members Paul Steele, Barrett, Richards and Steve Ziegelmeier, who was recently appointed.

"While we all miss Warren and Sharon," Barrett said, "I am sure I speak for the entire board when I say we wish them the best in their new home in Hutchinson."

Highway writers wanted

By **Jan Katz Ackerman**
Colby Free Press

Aspiring writers along U.S. Highway 24 have the chance to make their voices heard.

The Solomon Valley Highway 24 Heritage Alliance is accepting work from authors in the 24 communities from Glasco to Hoxie. Material in the areas of poetry, fiction, essay and autobiography can be submitted.

"The Solomon Valley Highway 24-Heritage Alliance is an organization dedicated to preserving the valley's heritage and its continuing its mission to cultivate writers," said Cindy Eller, librarian at Sheridan County Public Library.

Eller said in 2005, there were 49 entries in the first round of compe-

dition called "First Call for Voices." Entries are judged by a panel of Kansas authors including Denise Low, Robert Day, Tom Averill, Jim Hoy, and Fred Whitehead. Winners were recognized at the annual membership meeting in January.

Eller said throughout the year, the works of the winners will be featured in the Solomon Valley Anthology. Deadline for the second "Call for Valley Voices" is Nov. 1.

"The Solomon Valley Highway 24 Heritage Alliance invites writers of northwest Kansas to submit their works for this annual call," Eller said. "As well as an adult level, there are youth categories for youth 18 and younger."

Application form are available at the Sheridan County Public Library, 801 Royal Ave. in Hoxie.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Mindy Mead, left, climbed back up after being dunked during Fourth of July festivities while April McAdams, right, waited her turn to get dunked. The dunk tank was a popular diversion despite rain.

Fourth of July

Not a complete wash

By **Tisha Cox**
Colby Free Press

Even though Colby's fireworks show was postponed until today, the Colby High Plains Lions Club Fourth of July festivities still drew a good crowd.

The display was postponed because of rain and muddy conditions at Thomas County Fairgrounds, where the fireworks are shot off. The show is scheduled to begin from 10 p.m. to 10:15 p.m.

Rain didn't hamper the early evening activities at the fairgrounds, said Lions vice president John Mead.

"We were satisfied," he said. "Even with the rain the crowd was good."

"We'll do it again. I'm not disappointed at all." This was the first year the Lions Club organized activities and want to make it an annual event.

The Lions fed about 250 people, Mead said.

Lion Sheryl Brenn said people started showing up for dinner at about 5:30 p.m., and kept coming even after the rain started.

In honor of its 30th anniversary, Lions members wanted to give something back to the com-

munity, and chose the Fourth of July as the setting. The hot dog feed came together in only about six weeks, Mead said.

Games for kids outside were taken down by 8 p.m. because of the rain, but the dunk tank still had a crowd.

Brenn said during the heavy rain there were people with umbrellas at the dunk tank.

"What I enjoyed most was seeing people visiting and having a good time," Brenn said. Lions also took hot dogs to the residents of Infinia of Colby.

Mead said the event would not have been possible without help. Those providing support for the event were: Dillon's; State Farm; Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce; Sacred Heart Church/CYO; Thomas County Amusement Association; Thomas County Fair Board; Coca Cola; Thomas County Community Foundation; Sonic; The Part House; KXXX and The Ride; First Baptist Church; Dairy Queen; First Christian Church; Assembly of God Church; Commercial Sign; Woofter Construction and Lays.

Those interested in helping with next year's event may contact a Lions member.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Zachary Morris braved rain to take aim at the dunk tank during Fourth of July festivities Tuesday at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. The Colby High Plains Lions Club sponsored a free hot dog feed at the 4-H Building.

Convicted Enron founder Ken Lay dies today of heart attack

HOUSTON (AP) — Enron Corp. founder Kenneth Lay, who was convicted of helping perpetuate one of the most sprawling business frauds in U.S. history, died today of a heart attack in Colorado. He was 64.

The Pitkin, Colo., Sheriff's Department said officers were called to Lay's house in Old Snowmass, Colo., shortly after 1 a.m. Mountain time. He was taken to Aspen Valley Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 3:11 a.m. Lay, who lived in Houston, frequently vacationed in Colorado.

Family spokeswoman Kelly L. Kimberly issued a statement saying, "Ken Lay passed away early this morning in Aspen. The Lays have a very large family with whom they need to communicate. And out of respect for the family, we will release further details at a later time."

Pastor Steve Wende of First United Methodist Church of Houston, said in a statement that church member Lay died unexpectedly of

“... it was difficult to turn off that lifestyle like a spigot.”

Ken Lay
about personal expenses

a "massive coronary."

Wende said Lay and his wife, Linda, were in Colorado for the week "and his death was totally unexpected. Apparently, his heart simply gave out."

Lay was scheduled to be sentenced Oct. 23. He faced decades in prison.

Lay led Enron's meteoric rise from a staid natural gas pipeline company formed by a 1985 merger to an energy and trading conglomerate that reached No. 7 on the Fortune 500 in 2000 and claimed \$101 billion in annual revenues. He traveled in the highest business and political circles.

For many years, his corporation was the single biggest contributor to President Bush, who nicknamed him "Kenny Boy."

Lay was convicted May 25 along with former Enron CEO Jeffrey Skilling of defrauding investors and employees by repeatedly lying about Enron's financial strength in the months before the company plummeted into bankruptcy protection in December 2001. Lay was also convicted in a separate non-jury trial of bank fraud and making false statements to banks, charges related to his personal finances.

Skilling, reached by telephone at his home in Houston, told The As-

sociated Press that he was aware of Lay's death, but declined further comment.

Prosecutors in Lay's trial declined comment Wednesday, both on his unexpected death and what may become of the government's effort to seek a \$43.5 million judgment from Lay that they say he pocketed as part of the conspiracy.

Burt Palmer, the church's executive pastor, told The Associated Press that the Lays attended church in Houston on Sunday. "The church continues to love them and help them walk through this difficult time."

Pat Worcester, executive assistant to CEO at Aspen Valley Hospital, said Lay was admitted into the emergency room at 3:10 a.m. Wednesday. She said the hospital would release a statement later.

Lay had built Enron into a high-profile, widely admired company, the seventh-largest publicly traded in the country. But Enron collapsed after it was revealed the company's finances were based on a web of

fraudulent partnerships and schemes, not the profits that it reported to investors and the public.

When Lay and Skilling went on trial in U.S. District Court Jan. 30, it had been expected that Lay, who enjoyed great popularity throughout Houston as chairman of the energy company, might be able to charm the jury. But during his testimony, Lay ended up coming across as irritable and combative.

He also sounded arrogant, defending his extravagant lifestyle, including a \$200,000 yacht for wife Linda's birthday party, despite \$100 million in personal debt and saying "it was difficult to turn off that lifestyle like a spigot."

Both he and Skilling maintained that there had been no wrongdoing at Enron, and that the company had been brought down by negative publicity that undermined investors' confidence.

His defense didn't help his case with jurors.

"I wanted very badly to believe what they were saying," juror

Wendy Vaughan said after the verdicts were announced. "There were places in the testimony I felt their character was questionable."

Lay was born in Tyrone, Mo., and spent his childhood helping his family make ends meet. His father ran a general store and sold stoves until he became a minister. Lay delivered newspapers and mowed lawns to pitch in. He attended the University of Missouri, found his calling in economics, and went to work at Exxon Mobil Corp. predecessor Humble Oil Lamp; Refining upon graduation.

He joined the Navy, served his time at the Pentagon, and then served as undersecretary for the Department of the Interior before he returned to business. He became an executive at Florida Gas, then Transco Energy in Houston, and later became CEO of Houston Natural Gas. In 1985, HNG merged with InterNorth in Omaha, Neb. to form Enron, and Lay became chairman and CEO of the combined company the next year.