



# COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

## Commissioner loses close race

By Tisha Cox  
Colby Free Press

Republican Byron Sowers will run unopposed in the November general election for District 1 Thomas County Commissioner. He will replace Ron Evans who served in that position for 12 years.

Sowers defeated incumbent Evans 219 to 180 votes in Tuesday's primary.

Sowers said he approves the way the county is being run, the way tax money is spent and he is for progress.

"There are some things in the back of his mind, but I won't change anything right off," he said. "I want to see how things are done first."

Sowers farms and ranches in southeast Thomas county.

This is not the first political office Sowers, 55, he has ran for. He has served as North Randall Township clerk for several years.

"I have an interest in the county and I was born and raised here," Sowers said.

Evans said he had a good run as commissioner. "It's been a great experience working with the county's elected officials and employees," he said. "It's been fun."

In his 12 years in office, Evans said he has seen many changes among county personnel, including two sheriffs, four emergency medical services directors, four county health department administrators, three county clerks, three road department supervisors and three registers of deeds.

"I have no regrets," he said. "I enjoyed it."

Evans wishes Sowers the best of luck when he takes office.

"The job is no longer a simple one, and takes a lot of time," Evans said.

Evans said he will probably dedicate some of it to golf and fishing.

"The turnout for the primary was low, which was a disappointment," he said.

There was a contested township race, results were not available at press time.

Thomas County residents chose Ken Canfield to face off against Gov. Kathleen Sebelius in the November election. Statewide, Jim Barnett won the election.

Ken Canfield received 344 votes in Thomas County. The rest of the votes in Thomas County were: Barnett, 255; Robin Jennison, 232; Dennis Hawver, 21; Rex Crowell, 20; Timothy Pickell, 13; and Richard Rodewald, 10.

For Secretary of State, on the Republican side, Ron Thornburgh received 680 votes to Kay O'Connor's 269.

Thornburgh will run against Democrat David Haley, who received 88 votes in Thomas County. Haley was running against fellow Democrat Robert Beattie, who received 134 votes.

In the State Board of Education District 5 race, Connie Morris of St. Francis received 512 votes to Sally Cauble's 474. However, at the state level, Cauble beat Morris and will face Garden City Democrat Tim Cruz in the November election.

In other races, Jim Morrison received 919 votes and will run unopposed for his Kansas House seat; U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran received 964 votes and will face opposition in November from John Doll, who received 220 votes.

## Flower power



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Fair Superintendent Tami Goossen re-arranged Ethan Jay's 4-H grand champion sunflower display at the Thomas County Free Fair Tuesday. Goossen's responsibilities as superintendent for

garden and flowers are placing ribbons, organizing displays and helping judge the many entries at the fair. The fair runs through Saturday at the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

## Technical difficulties hamper Thomas County voting

By Patty Decker  
Free Press Editor

Problems with new voting equipment in Thomas County resulted in election results being delayed many hours Tuesday.

"If everything would have worked out the way it was supposed to we would have been done and had our report to the Secretary of State by 9 p.m.," said Shelly Harms, Thomas County clerk.

The reason for the delay involved reading the scanned ballots and lack of memory in order to tally mail-in ballots with the machine-generated votes.

"Our biggest issue was when we were ready to import data into the computer and export everything together for the final tally — there wasn't enough memory," Harms said.

The computer's memory capability was taking all the CDs from each voting location, but when it came time to input the mail-in ballots, the system slowed down and was unable to calibrate.

The county clerk's computer has a 250 RAM capacity, but it needed an additional 1,024 RAM chips in order to process both reports to-



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Barb Hopper, Susan Guill and county clerk Shelly Harms worked today to confirm results from the primary election held Tuesday.

gether. "We were having to pull the voting equipment apart and take the memory chips out of those machines to put into the tallying com-

puter. By 10 p.m., and the fourth time memory chips were taken from voting equipment, the election crew was able to count the mail-in bal-

lots. However, it required two reports instead of what normally would have been only one.

Harms and her two assistants,

Barb Hopper and Susan Guill, left the courthouse at 2:37 a.m. today.

Recalling the day, Harms said everything started off good.

"We had no issues in Brewster and only minimal issues in Rexford," she said.

In Rexford, one of the elderly poll workers accidentally pulled the monitor too close toward her hitting the on and off button and disconnecting the cable.

Wrong cables caused some encrypting problems at the Colby Community Building; however, that situation was corrected by accessing another screen within the voting machine.

Another problem in Rexford occurred when the room got so hot that the archiving program in the voting equipment locked up, but after it was rebooted the archives returned.

Harms said she has made "strict stipulations" to the voting equipment representatives for the November general election.

The company, Voting Technologies International of Waukesha, Wis., agreed to have a sales representative available on site for that election.

Additionally, Harms said, she insisted they have the right cables,

enough memory chips, at their cost, and someone there to help avoid any other disasters.

"I really like the new machines and if they can get things to work accurately, it will be the best thing for Thomas County. I think things will run smoother and quicker for the November general election," she said.

Feedback from the voters was also positive. Voter turnout seemed unaffected by the new machines. Harms reported a 25 percent turnout with just over 1,400 of the 5,340 eligible voters going to the polls.

In talking with state officials and other county clerks, Harms said the average statewide was about 23 percent voter turnout.

Thomas County wasn't the only location with voting equipment glitches. According to sources in Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh's office, Dickinson County had minor problems and Clay County had trouble formatting a computer disk.

As of 11 p.m. Tuesday, no election results had still been reported from 15 of the 105 counties, but by midnight, only Harvey, Sherman, Stevens and Thomas had not called in.

## Conservatives lose majority of seats on State Board of Education

TOPEKA (AP) — Moderate Republicans scored key primary victories in State Board of Education races, wresting control from conservatives in a battle shaped by the debate over the teaching of evolution.

Conservative Republicans began Tuesday with a 6-4 board majority. However, one of their incumbents lost, and a pro-evolution moderate won the GOP nomination for a seat held by a retiring conservative.

The results left only four board members who voted last year to adopt science standards that questioned the validity of evolutionary theory.

In one of the most watched races on the ballot, Sally Cauble, of Liberal, defeated anti-evolution incumbent Connie Morris, of St. Francis. With 99 percent of the pre-

cincts reporting early Wednesday, Cauble held a 54 percent to 46 percent lead in the 5th District, which covers 41 western counties.

Morris, a former teacher, has described evolution as "an age-old fairy tale" and "a nice bedtime story" unsupported by science. She also had drawn criticism for her outspokenness on teaching children of immigrants and sex education.

Pro-evolution candidate Jana Shaver, an Independence Republican, defeated conservative Brad Patzer of Neodesha, who supported the new standards. Patzer is the son-in-law of incumbent Iris Van Meter, of Thayer, who is not seeking re-election. Shaver won 58 percent of the vote, to 42 percent for Patzer.

Two other conservatives fared better, but face challenges in November, where victo-

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Joe Aistrup,  
Kansas State University

ries by Democrats could leave the conservative bloc with just two members.

Republican John Bacon, of Olathe, kept his 3rd District seat by besting two pro-evolution challengers, as did conservative Ken Willard, of Hutchinson, in the 7th District.

Janet Waugh, a Kansas City Democrat who opposed the new standards, defeated a more conservative Democrat who fa-

vored the anti-evolution language with 65 percent of the vote.

Kansas State University political scientist Joe Aistrup said it was a bit of a surprise that conservatives lost their majority. He had expected perhaps one seat to swing to moderates — creating a tie — but not the majority.

Aistrup said the 5th and 9th districts are predominantly rural, creating an expecta-

tion that they'd be more to the right.

"This time around, enough voters decided to cast their lots with people like Cauble and Shaver," Aistrup said. "And the two remaining conservatives are not out of the woods, yet."

Except for Waugh's 1st District, Democratic candidates went unchallenged in primaries. The party's nominees were Don Weiss, of Olathe, in the 3rd; former Garden City Mayor Tim Cruz in the 5th; and former Rep. Jack Wempe, of Lyons, in the 7th.

Control of the Kansas school board has slipped into, out of and back into conservative Republicans' hands since 1998, resulting in anti-evolution standards for student testing in 1999, evolution-friendly ones in 2001 and anti-evolution ones again last year.