



COLBY FREE PRESS



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Irvin Schwarz of Colby, employed with the Kansas Northwest Regional Recycling Organization, foreground, and Randy Huffman, background, sorted through materials to be recycled.

Huffman, with the city of Oakley street department, brought in materials to the recycling center. The center has experienced growth, and is one of the top centers in the state.

Northwest Kansas recycling growing

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Recycling in Thomas County started almost 10 years ago with only a handful of volunteers to build a program that would benefit conservation efforts and add life to the landfill.

Armed with little more than a dream in Thomas County and other neighboring counties, recycling in northwest Kansas has mushroomed into one of the top 10 recycling programs in the state, said Lynette Koon, coordinator of the Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling Organization.

The center was established in September 2003.

The reasons for the organization's success centers around cooperation between Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Logan, Rawlins, Sheridan and Thomas counties with a potential to involve more than 35,200 people in the seven counties.

Because of the membership dues

and other revenue, the organization can sustain itself in exploring grant money for furthering recycling efforts, cooperatively marketing materials, reducing labor costs, equipment expense and protecting natural resources.

"Sherman and Wallace are still missing from the organization," she said, "but the regional goal is for them to consider joining sometime in the near future."

Each of the seven counties has two directors and one alternate director and money for the organization comes from cities and counties, along with grant money and money brought back into the group through the sale of recovered materials.

"The organization is a grassroots, volunteer and partnership-oriented program," Koon said, "and the regional facility is located in Colby.

According to the organization's annual meeting held in March 2005, the total income from membership dues, sale of materials, state grant and miscellaneous funds totaled \$219,445 with 456 tons of materi-

“Our five-year goal is to have 25 percent of households involved.”

Lynette Koon,
Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling

als collected. That is a net income of \$27,581.14, Koon said.

Recycling materials collected from the six counties involved during 2005 (Sheridan County joined in 2006) included 197,080 pounds of cardboard; 23,340 pounds of steel cans; 74,490 pounds of chipboard; 75,490 pounds of junk mail; about 26,000 pounds of various plastics; 244,080 pounds of newspaper; 184,740 pounds of magazines; 67,375 pounds of glass; and 8,680 pounds of aluminum cans.

Putting recycling efforts into perspective, Koon said that based on 2005 figures, the organization includes about 10 percent of households within the member counties.

"Our five-year goal is to have 25 percent of households involved in recycling," she said.

Considering three to four years ago, recycling efforts were from a minimal percentage of homes, the organization has made major strides, she said.

While more can be done to add life to county landfills, Koon said that in 2005 about 1,557 tons of recycled materials were either shipped to a papermill in Hutchinson or sent to other manufacturers in Kansas.

Koon said the regional organization is in the process of setting up a web site that when completed will provide history and other information about each member county.

In the near future, the organization will provide information regarding a logo contest and other highlights involving the member counties.

Colby resident remembered

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Jay Donelan left a lasting impact on Colby. Donelan, 82, died Monday, Aug. 28, in Colby.

He owned Donelan Jewelry for 48 years before selling the business and retiring in 1995. Bonnie Dinkel and Deanna Mallory bought the business in 1995. Both started working at the jewelry store in 1987.

Dinkel said the store has always been at its present location.

"He was patient," Dinkel said. "He was such a wonderful person."

She said not long after she started working for Donelan, she was engraving a clock and made a mistake. He was gone, so she grabbed another, and made a second mistake on it.

"Instead of getting angry with her, he said it was an opportunity to learn from mistakes. If he was angry, he didn't show it," Dinkel said.

Dinkel said she and Mallory kept his name on the business after they purchased it, and it still has his name more than 10 years later.

"I think it really made him proud we did that," Dinkel said. "He would always come to visit, and was happy they kept his name on the business."

And he jokingly threatened if they didn't live up to the name on the door, he would scratch it off.

His wife, Marilyn, said he purchased the business from Ben Sooby after working for him as a watch repairman for a year.

After coming home from the Army Air Corps where he flew 35 B-17 bomber missions, he went to watch repair school and went to work for Sooby.

Marilyn said Jay enjoyed fixing things, and repaired watches, jewelry and eyeglasses.

"Intricate work didn't seem to bother him," she said.

He was a lifelong resident of Colby, and his family has deep connections to the community. His great-grandfather was the first mayor of Colby, and Jay's brothers,

Bill and John Donelan owned Colby Supermarket.

More than five decades of his life was spent with Marilyn.

They were married 55 years. She met him after moving to Colby to work for her brother. His office was above the jewelry store, and during afternoon breaks, she would walk to a downtown coffee shop.

Marilyn said that's when Jay noticed her. They dated only three months before marrying; she said he was 27-28 and she, 21.

"We had 55 wonderful years," she said. "I was truly, truly blessed."

They had two children, a son and a daughter, who are both in the medical field, and five grandchildren.

Marilyn said Jay was particularly proud of his Irish heritage. When he retired in 1995, one of the first things they did was take a trip to Ireland. Their children went with them.

"It was an absolute ball," she said. An Irish wake was held after his funeral last week.

"It was really nice," Marilyn said.

He was also proud of his military service, and on their 50th anniversary, he took a ride on a B-17 bomber, which he called his "36th mission."

Marilyn said he enjoyed his work, and had a good relationship with customers.

"He treated customers like family," she said. "He also had a family relationship with his employees, who he called 'Jay's Angels.'"

Marilyn said he knew almost everyone in the community, and enjoyed attending sporting events. He loved Colby, and didn't want to ever move away.

"He came from a wonderful family, and was a cut above most humans. He was a rare jewel in the jeweler business," she said.

Annual fly-in Saturday

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

It will be nothing but pancakes, parachutes and planes Saturday at Colby Municipal Airport.

Friends of the Colby Airport are

preparing for their seventh annual fly-in beginning at 6:30 a.m. with a pancake, eggs and sausage breakfast.

But there will be more than food.

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Western Kansas school officials need basketball referees

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

Since the inception of high school basketball referees, fans have known when referees blow their whistles, the game stops. But with western Kansas schools facing a shortage of referees, how will the games continue?

The Northwest Kansas League, which includes Colby High, announced several basketball games for this season may have to be rescheduled because of the lack of referees. The Western Kansas Liberty League, another northwest Kansas league of smaller high schools, has the same problem.

"Five years ago I had 13 crews. Now I am at six crews, and there are three to a crew," said Jim Keenan, commissioner of the Northwest Kansas League and teacher at Oakley High School. His duty is to find and schedule referees for basketball games.

Games are typically played on Tuesdays and Fridays, but because having few referees, school officials are considering playing Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays to meet available referees' schedules.

"We will hold off as long as we



FILE PHOTO

An official watched the action during a Colby High School basketball game last season. A declining number of referees in western Kansas is making schools and leagues consider rescheduling games to meet available referees' schedules.

can," said Keenan.

Keenan said the decreasing number of referees has been noticed the past few years. Reasons vary.

"I don't think it is just one reason," Keenan said. "Some of the reasons are school controlled and other rea-

sons are not. We also fight the battle of western Kansas — everybody leaves."

Harv Kahle, the commissioner of the Western Kansas Liberty League and teacher in Winona, said he knows some referees are concerned

about the abuse from fans during games but that is not the sole reason.

"I don't put all the blame on the crowds," Kahle said.

"We had two crews quit because

Referee: Fans are tough

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

High school basketball referee Quintin Flanagin has noticed two things at referee meetings held before the start of the season.

He is seeing the same people every year, but fewer than the year before.

"It's been a problem from 10 years ago when I was in high school," he said. "You see the same group every year."

A declining number of high school basketball referees is concerning western Kansas schools and leagues so much, games this year may have to be rescheduled to fit available referees' schedules.

Reasons for the declining number vary, from the declining population of western Kansas to the comments made from fans in the stands. Flanagin, 27, has been an official for basketball for nine years and football for four years. He started to officiate right out of high school.

"Some fans are tough," Flanagin said. "When you are in the stands, you get a different perspective."

Basketball fans sit closer to the action than football fans do.

"In basketball, they are right on top of you, that has got to be one of the top reasons why not to do it," he said.

What helps Flanagin avoid the fans' screams is focusing more on the game.

"I'm willing to listen to coaches — and we have great coaches in western Kansas. But when you focus on the game you don't hear it from the fans as much. During timeouts you do hear it."

Flanagin said those interested in becoming a referee must not only be in good physical health, but mental health so the comments from fans won't be taken personally. Flanagin likes officiating because of the physical workout and benefits.

"I was never a super athlete in high school," he said.

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