



12 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

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Serving Thomas County since 1888

## New sheriff appointed for Sheridan

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Sheridan County residents will see a familiar face when their next sheriff takes office next week, but they can expect changes in how his office is managed.

"The good 'ol boy days are gone," Undersheriff Brian Fenner said. "I'm not going to be putting up with that."

Fenner, the only applicant for the job, was given five minutes to tell Republican Party members why they should appoint him to fill the unexpired term of Sheriff Jim Johnson, killed in the line of duty Oct. 26.

"I feel it would be beneficial to the county that I serve as sheriff," Fenner said.

Sheridan County Republican Party members met Monday to appoint someone to replace Johnson, a Republican who served as sheriff for 18 years. Party Chairman Doren Follis of Hoxie conducted the special convention during which Fenner was appointed by unanimous vote.

Fenner, 50, who worked with Johnson for the past 17 years, said changes have to be made to avoid another tragedy.

Johnson was talking with Steven Reitcheck about his voluntary commitment to a mental facility. Distraught over his father's 2003 death, Reitcheck recently vandalized Leroy Reitcheck's gravesite and tried to exhume the coffin. Shortly after agreeing to commitment, Steven Reitcheck pulled a gun and fatally shot Johnson. Johnson returned fire, but Reitcheck was shot and killed by part-time deputy, Brandon Fenner, Brian Fenner's son.

At the time of Johnson's death, questions arose as to why Reitcheck had a concealed weapon in the sheriff's office. The day following Johnson's death, Kansas Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director Kyle Smith said small town offices tend to get too relaxed and do not take all the precautionary measures available to avoid incidents like Johnson's death.

Fenner said the sheriff's office is already in the process of being made more secure. He said the public will no longer have direct access to the office.

Unlike the incident involving Reitcheck, Fenner said from now on all individuals being transported by the sheriff's office will be searched for weapons.

## Christmas on Us! beginning today

By Patty Decker  
Free Press Editor

Colby Free Press' Christmas on Us! is back for its eighth year.

The Colby Free Press and 10 Colby merchants are partnering to make the holiday season a great way to buy local while adding fun for shoppers. Shoppers receive one ticket for every \$10 transaction at any sponsoring business. There is a limit of 250 tickets per person per transaction at any sponsor.

Those tickets could win cash prizes.

This year's promotion kicks off today with tickets available at participating businesses. The \$50 scrip money instant winners can begin claiming prizes starting next Wednesday by looking for matching numbers hidden in Wednesday's ads.

A complete list of rules and highlights about the participating merchants can be found on pages 6, 7 in today's Free Press.

The two biggest prizes, \$500 and \$1,000, will be drawn Saturday, Dec. 16. Winning tickets need to be

presented at the drawing to claim the big prizes.

Merchants who are not yet signed up for this promotion still have time to do so by calling Ad Manager Crystal Rucker or ad representatives Jasmine Crotinger and Joe Hayes at 462-3963.

This year's participating merchants include:

- Beringer Hardware
- Colby Ag
- Office Works and Home Furnishings
- Cal Spas
- Farm Bureau Financial
- Image Makers/McKee Inc.
- Prairie Skillet
- Colby Implement
- Great Western Tire
- T.O. Haas

Since the promotion's inception in 1999, more than 350,000 tickets have been handed out making Christmas on Us! one of the best ways to boost Colby's economy during the holiday season while offering shoppers a lot of excitement and anticipation that they could be the next grand prize winner.

## The Magic of Christmas



**ABOVE:** Holly Stephens, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce, added finishing touches to the fireplace Tuesday at Santa City.

**RIGHT:** Work on this year's Santa City started Oct. 30 with the Colby College baseball team bringing over all the boxes stored at city's public work's department. The Colby College girls softball team then set up the 64 Christmas trees and Stephens, along with Leilani Thomas, Convention and Visitors Bureau director, and her husband, Chuck assisted with the many displays. Also helping was Lottie McLemore and many other volunteers within the community. Santa City opens to the public at 5:30 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 3, following the Christmas parade in downtown Colby. More details about the parade and activities will appear in a future edition.



## County's election problem discovered

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

A voting machine glitch in Thomas County created havoc in counting the Nov. 7 election ballots.

Poll workers counted ballots until 3 a.m. Wednesday at the Thomas County courthouse after one piece of election equipment failed.

"It was a loose connection in the bottom of the scantron which counts ballots," Deputy Clerk Barbara Hopper said.

"It wasn't determined until an employee of Voting Technology Inc. out of Wisconsin came on Thursday."

Hopper said poll workers had to count 644 of the 1,254 advance ballots filed in the election.

On Monday, Thomas County Commissioners Ron Evans, Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen canvassed the votes and made the election results official.

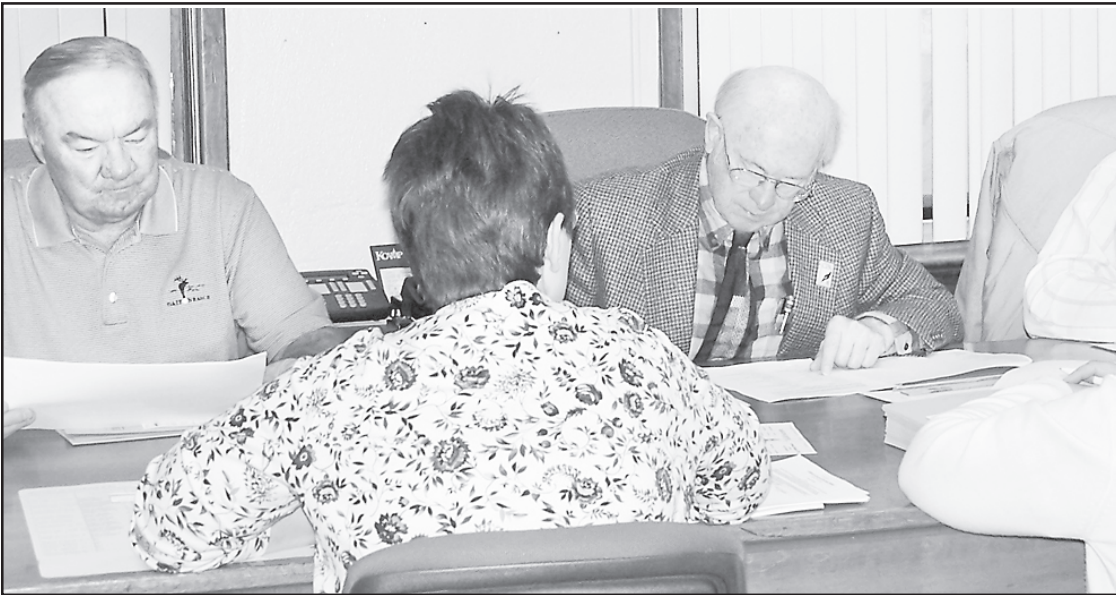
As part of the process, 67 provisional ballots had to be opened. All but one of those ballots was counted, that one being cast by an individual with a felony conviction which precludes voting rights.

"A lot of people moved and didn't register," Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms said.

"But even with the provisional ballots, it didn't change the election."

Harms said she is required by state law to notify each voter whose ballot ended as a provisional one whether his or her vote counted.

"I've decided to write each per-



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

son a personal letter about their provisional ballot," she said.

Among final tallies were results of township clerk races. In order to be elected, a candidate must receive at least three votes. Township results are as follows:

- West Hale: Mike Schultz, 4; and all receiving one vote were Dave Bowman, Jon Eicher, Judy Reid, Kenneth Kammer and Michelle Werth.
- East Hale: Scott Collett, 3; and with one vote were C.W. Hamilton, Dale Deaver, Kristy Kern, Scott Collett, Tom Rundel and Dale Tubbs.

- Summers: Dee Olson, 74; and Claude Herren, Craig Reed and Lynn Goossen, 1.
- Kingery: Shawn Sammons, 41.
- Morgan: Shawn Fromholtz, 3; and with one vote were Amie Kendrick, D. Kriss Schroeder, Greg Gordon, Lynn Soosen, Rod Eisenbise, Rodney Zimmerman, Teri Cloe, Tina Harris, Janice Frahm and Ron Evans.
- Rovohl: Arnold Wehkamp, 53.
- North Randall: Linda Sowers, 26, Doyle Saddler, 1.
- Smith: Vernon Vance, 6; Autumn Arasmith, Joan Todd, Joleen Hanson, Patty Purcell, Stephen

- Allen and Vernon Vance, 1.
- Lacey: Pete Ziegelmeier, 37.
- Wendell: Kenneth Johnston, 38; Alan Cheney, 1.
- Menlo: Loren Guill, 18.
- South Randall: Gene Huelsman, 46; James Rumbach, 22; Randy Ladenberger and Jim Fellhoelter, 1.
- Commissioners approved a \$14,894 grant with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment for public health preparedness.

Harms said she is in the process of talking with state officials about the grant and did not know when

## Tumblewinds



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Tuesday night's wind left tumbleweeds in front of this Colby home on the west side of the city. Mike Albers, the city's technology director, said the peak wind gust was 52 mph before midnight. Police Chief Randy Jones said the only wind damage reported last night was to the glass door at the First Presbyterian Church. A spokesperson for the sheriff's department said the high winds blew over a semi on Interstate 70 eastbound at the Brewster exit. Some farmers also reported corn was damaged from the winds.