



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Health insurance increases in district

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Health insurance premiums for Colby School District employees are going up. The school board approved the rate increase at its meeting Monday.

District financial officer Jo DeYoung said premiums were increasing and the board had not raised the district's contribution in some time. Now, the district will increase its contribution while some of the cost is shared by the employees.

The rates for a single are increasing \$5, and \$45 for a family. The new contribution for a single plan is \$30 a month. The new contribution for family is \$500 per month. The district will pay \$360 per single plan and \$330 per family plan per month.

The board also toured the Thomas County Learning Center in downtown Colby. Director Melinda Fikan explained it provides a place for people to complete their high school diploma.

Educational Services and Staff Development of Central Kansas provides the center.

The group has 14 around the state, with one in Colby and another in Goodland.

High school principal Rocky Robbins said high school students use the center, where the staff tries to help them reach graduation. Seventy-six students are currently on the roster. Students from Atwood, Oberlin, Hoxie and Grinnell have used the center.

Fikan said the graduation rate is about 25 students a year, but it still is not where she would like to see it.

"We've had a lot of repeat students," she said.

Some lack only a credit or two, and Fikan tries to emphasize the importance of having a diploma because of its advantages.

Students work at their own pace, and can't advance until lessons are turned in and graded.

"Some of them find this harder," she said. "They have to attempt the work."

Most of the classes are online, so students can work from home.

"A few students who completed the program have gone on to college. Others are happy with just getting their diploma; some have gone into the military," Fikan said.

The U.S. Army accepts only so many people with GEDs each year, so the military encourages students to get a high school diploma.

Some recruiters have even recommended students to the center.

Fikan would like to have students visit Colby Community College to see what it has to offer.

"We usually don't turn people away if there is something we can help them with," Fikan said.

In other business, the board approved:

- A three-year contract with Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball to provide audit services for the school district for 2007-2009.

- The total contract was for \$25,245.

- Eight early graduation requests.

- A supplemental contract for Gordon Rasmussen to be an assistant wrestling coach at Colby High School.

- The board set a date for its goal-setting retreat. It will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13. A representative from Educational Services and Staff Development of Central Kansas will facilitate the session.

- The board also went into executive session for 20 minutes to discuss superintendent Kirk Nielsen's evaluation.

No action was taken.

The color of the holiday



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Masha Claassen colors Thursday during KGCR's annual community Thanksgiving dinner held Thursday at the Thomas County Fairgrounds 4-H building. The radio station's event included a traditional Thanksgiving dinner followed by a variety of games and activities for families.

Colby doctor goes to court on Tuesday

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

A Colby doctor will have his day in court Tuesday when a district judge considers his appeal of an order by the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts that revoked his license to practice medicine.

District Judge Jack Burr of Goodland will hear Dr. Victor Hildyard's appeal at 10 a.m. in the Thomas County District Court-house.

Mike O'Neal of Hutchinson will represent Hildyard and Mark Stafford of Topeka is representing the board of healing arts.

The appeal is the doctor's attempt in overturning the board's June decision to revoke his license, O'Neal said.

"Decisions by the board of healing arts are supposed to be in the best interest of patient care," O'Neal said.

"The decision to revoke Dr. Hildyard's license, if upheld, would actually be detrimental to patient care in northwest Kansas," O'Neal talked about the appeal procedure and possible outcomes.

"Patients in northwest Kansas and Dr. Hildyard's remedy lies in the right to appeal administrative agency decisions to district court and have erroneous decisions reversed," he said.

Following the Kansas Supreme Court's decision last week that removed Hildyard's stay on his medical license, Stafford said he would agree to anything that expedited the hearing.

Hildyard has been unable to



Dr. Victor H. Hildyard

practice medicine since mid-November awaiting the district court hearing.

"I am willing to forego oral arguments in the district court if necessary," Stafford said.

"This could speed up matters in deciding whether or not the judge would overturn or uphold the board's order."

Although it is unclear whether Burr will rule on this case, O'Neal said the judge has options including upholding the state board of healing art's decision, reinstating board of hearing arts presiding officer Edward Gaschler's initial order which cleared Hildyard of malpractice, or making other findings.

Hoxie women to improve the walk in the park

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Two Hoxie women have taken on the challenge of updating one of the city parks including making it accessible to disabled children.

Michelle Foote and Lola Baalman formed a two-person committee to research playground equipment and meet with company representatives before talking with city officials about their dream for an updated Kiddie Park.

Located at the corner of Noble Avenue and 14th Street, the park is owned by the city; however, the local Rotary Club maintains it, except for mowing.

"We are excited the park will be ADA approved, including rubberized mulch under the equipment, two ramps and 640 rubberized tile for easy movement of wheelchairs," Foote said.

The two women have raised almost \$40,000 of the \$80,000 project in just one month.

"We are over half way there and have tentatively received two grants," Foote said. "And the city has graciously agreed to match up to \$40,000."

The women hope to complete their portion of the fundraising by hosting a spaghetti dinner and silent auction next month.



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

Connor Lanning, the son of Chad and Mandy Lanning of Colby played on the swings in one of Hoxie's parks Thanksgiving Day. Park equipment at 14th and Noble will be replaced as part of an \$80,000 renovation project.

"We are hosting a spaghetti dinner complete with garlic bread and a salad at the Hoxie Elks from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Dec. 10," Foote said. "The silent auction will be from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m."

Anyone having items to donate

toward the silent auction is asked to call Foote at (785) 675-3971 or Baalman at (785) 855-2210.

Besides equipment, the project includes completing fencing on parts of the park which currently lack chain-link fence. Other aspects

of the project Foote and Baalman are working on are to have the restrooms open year round. They are currently closed each winter.

"Nextech has agreed to make the park a 'hot spot' so you can use your laptop computer from the park,"

Student pleads no contest in alleged school-shooting plot

COLUMBUS (AP) — A 16-year-old charged in an alleged school-shooting plot at Riverton High School has pleaded no contest in the case.

Caleb Byrd, 16, on Wednesday pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge of disorderly conduct. He previously had been charged with misdemeanor con-

spiracy to riot. Judge Robert Fleming sentenced Byrd to probation until the end of the school year and 100 hours of community service.

He also ordered Byrd to pay court costs of \$25.

"He wants to start moving out of this fiasco, so to speak," Byrd's attorney Eddie Battitori said after the hearing. At previous hearings

Battitori had said he wanted to try the case before a judge to clear his client's name.

The judge had denied an earlier request for a jury trial.

Battitori said despite his client deciding not to continue to fight prosecution, he believes authorities acted inappropriately in the case.

"It was all completely sensation-

alized and blown out of proportion," Battitori said.

Andrew Jaeger, 15, on Friday also pleaded no contest to the same reduced charge. Fleming said after Wednesday's hearing. He said he found Jaeger guilty and sentenced him to probation until the end of the school year. Fleming said he did not sentence Jaeger to community ser-

vice because Jaeger's father has a health condition that requires his son's care.

Before the plea, Fleming said he had denied a motion by Jaeger's attorney, JoAnna Derfelt, to suppress evidence collected in the case.

Fleming also had previously denied Derfelt's request for a jury trial for Jaeger.