



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Ho-Ho-Ho!!!



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Cooper Armstrong, left, and sister Zoie Armstrong, right, visited Santa Claus at Santa City Saturday. Santa City opened this weekend, and will be open each weekend until Christmas for children to tell Santa their Christmas wishes. Zoie and Cooper, from Lincoln, Neb., are the grandchildren of Carolyn Armstrong of Colby. Santa City hours are posted at the entrance of Fike Park.

Sheridan County election

Ballot count approved

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

The outcome of the Nov. 7 general election in Sheridan County stands as tallied election night. Ron Schamberger will continue as commissioner despite a ballot recount that showed his competitor had more votes.

Sheridan County Attorney Mike Haas advised Commissioners David Zimmerman, Ron Schamberger and Keith Kennedy today they need to hold a new election for District No. 1 commission seat.

Haas said the only way to end controversy about the election is to have a new election for the contested race involving Schamberger and Victor Bielser.

Incumbent Schamberger's vote count at close of polls was 220 to Victor Bielser's 214 votes. But after learning some 50 ballots went uncounted, 15 of which were from District No. 1, Bielser asked for a recount.

District No. 1 is made up of the townships of Adell, Bow Creek, East Kenneth, Valley, East Saline and West Saline. After the recount, Bielser was the winner over Schamberger by seven votes — 227 to 220. Despite the recount, the commissioners did not certify the outcome of Schamberger the winner.

The first count of ballots was canvassed Nov. 13.

With no motion being made to order a new election, Haas left the meeting before 10 a.m.

Decatur County Attorney Steve Hirsch, special council hired by the commissioners, attended the meeting.

Hirsch advised the commissioners the board of canvassers would have to decide the county's next step for the election.

Hirsch said the secretary of state's office requires an abstract of the outcome of state and national elections, but local election out-

comes have to be decided locally. He said since the board of canvassers did not officially order a recount of the Nov. 7 election, the recount, in his opinion, was not valid.

Zimmerman said the board of canvassers could accept the Nov. 7 tallies, order a new election or certify or not certify the recount tallies.

The board of canvassers, made up of Zimmerman, Kennedy and Sheridan County Treasurer Esther Bainter, who sat in for Schamberger, who recused himself since he is a candidate.

Questions raised about why the recount was not certified were answered by Zimmerman.

Deputy Clerk Lea Herl read portions of approved minutes from the Nov. 18 special meeting.

Topping the list was commissioners believed the ballot box and related ballot sacks may not have been secured properly by the election officer, County Clerk Paula Bielser. They also allege she failed to accept assistance from the equipment company, ES & S, to figure out why the counting machine didn't properly read about 50 ballots.

The commissioners also allege Paula Bielser at several times was alone with the ballots after voting stopped election night.

Commissioners said the board of canvassers, per state statute, had not ordered the recount despite Victor Bielser asking it be done.

Other reasons for not certifying the recount included concerns about the election raised by registered voters; a delay in acting on the ballot consensus by the resolution board on election night; and an interruption of that board by individuals putting tables away in the room being used by the resolution board.

Hirsch said unless someone affected by the board of canvassers' decision challenges the decision by filing paperwork in Sheridan County District Court, Schamberger will serve as county commissioner starting in January.

Masonic dedications set for Saturday

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The Masons will be holding two dedications Saturday said Steve Molstad, Grand Master of the Masons of Kansas.

Dedications will be for a flag pole at St. Thomas Masonic Lodge and Ascension on the Prairie Episcopal Church.

At 1 p.m., the flag pole dedication will be at the Masonic Hall, 215 N.



S. Molstad

Franklin, where a stone will be placed at the base of the flagpole. Molstad, 54, said it will be similar to a ceremony once done by George Washington in the nation's capital.

"There will be a large contingency of Masons from across the state," Molstad said.

The flag pole dedication will include a procession tuxedo-clad Masons.

The second dedication will follow at 2:30 p.m., where Masons will dedicate the Episcopal Church, 1170 Wheat Ridge Road. That ceremony will feature the placing of a plaque on the building.

Molstad said there are 30,000

Masons in Kansas, and many officers will be present for the dedications.

Such events are tradition for Masons, which usually consists of the laying of a foundation stone for a building.

The foundation stones are a Mason tradition for anything from public buildings to churches, museums, libraries and hospitals.

"We come only on request," Molstad said.

"I'm on the road constantly putting stones in buildings."

Anywhere from 12 to 20 dedications are done each year. Many of them are in eastern Kansas, but Molstad said one recent dedication

was the new addition at Scott City High School. Another was a cornerstone in the addition to the Fort Wallace Museum.

Molstad did not know the last time a similar ceremony was held in Colby, but said the last time the Kansas Grand Master was a Colby resident was in 1942.

The Grand Master that year was Cline Curtiss.

Molstad has been the Grand Master since March, and his term will run through March 2007. He spends many weekends on the road going to dedications across the state.

In Colby, there are about 150 Masons. Molstad has been a member for 33 years.

Kansas senator leaves judicial nominee in limbo over marriage issues

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Sam Brownback is considering whether to stop blocking a judicial nominee over concerns her appearance at a lesbian commitment ceremony betrayed her legal views on gay marriage.

The Kansas Republican, a potential presidential candidate in 2008, said Michigan Court of Appeals Judge Janet T. Neff should not be disqualified automatically for having attended the ceremony. But Brownback made clear it raised doubts in his mind.

"But what I want to know is, what does

it do to her look at the law? What does she consider the law on same-sex marriage, on civil unions, and I'd want to consider that," Brownback said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

President Bush nominated Neff, who has a liberal reputation, to be a U.S. District Court judge as part of a compromise struck with Democrats.



Brownback

Neff's nomination is pending before the full Senate; Brownback has stalled it because of her attendance at the 2002 ceremony in Massachusetts.

"I'm still looking at the Neff situation, and I will in the future," Brownback said.

Neff has said she attended as a friend of one of the two women, a longtime neighbor.

Neff has declined to answer Brownback's queries on whether the Constitution guarantees a right to same-sex marriage or civil unions, saying it would be improper to address questions that might

come before her as a federal judge.

Brownback called gay marriage a developing area of the law best not left to the judiciary anyway.

"To me these issues should be decided by the legislative bodies, not by the judicial bodies, and it seems to me this may indicate some view of hers on the legal issue. And that's what I'm concerned about here, is her view of the legal issue involving same-sex marriage," Brownback said.

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., urged taking a step back, away from "the political agenda," in considering judicial appointees.

"You know, these are important lifetime appointments.

"These men and women who serve on the bench, we really trust their judgment and their wisdom and giving these political litmus tests I don't think is in the best interest of justice in America," said Durbin, who will be the No. 2 Democrat in the Senate.

In an Oct. 12 letter to Brownback, Neff said a minister presided over the ceremony and she insisted her attendance would not affect her ability to act fairly as a federal judge.

Winner claims prize

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The first Christmas On Us! winner has claimed \$50 instant prize in scrip money.

Ron Biggs of Colby said he got his winning ticket at Farm Bureau Financial. He said the last time he won something was more than 30 years ago at a Christmas drawing held downtown.

For those who haven't visited any of the local merchants participating in the drawing, there's still plenty of time to gather tickets for either one of the nine more \$50 instant winner prize or the \$500 and \$1,000 big prizes.

Now in its eighth year, the Colby

Free Press' Christmas on Us! is back partnering with 10 other Colby merchants to make the holiday season a great way to buy local while adding fun for shoppers.

The way this promotion works is 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.

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.

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; and T.O. Haas

For questions about the promotion, call 462-3963.



R. Biggs



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

High rider

Workers from Commercial Sign in Colby set a semi truck today as part of a new sign for Truck Town on Interstate 70. Bruce Bandy, with Commercial Sign, said the tractor weighs 9,000 pounds and sits 25 feet off the ground.