

# Jury trial rare in Sheridan County

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Sheridan County District Court is scheduled to conduct its first jury trial next month, the first one in almost 10 years.

The trial is scheduled to settle a lawsuit involving Hoxie Implement Company, Inc., owned by Gerald Heim, who alleges Cody Hoss of Gorham and Abdon Jaimes of Wichita, damaged several pieces of his equipment in an auto accident on March 7, 2002.

Heim is asking the court for a judgment in excess of \$75,000 in damages.

A jury pool of 100 residents have been notified by District Court Clerk Vergie Wenthe. Trial, with a jury of 12, will start Dec. 11.

The four-day trial will be presided over by District Judge Glenn

Schiffner of Colby.

According to court documents, Heim alleges one of his semi-trucks and associated equipment was damaged when Hoss attempted to pass Jaimes south of Hoxie on K-23 in fog on an icy road.

The case is long in making its way to the courtroom because both sides participated in case management sessions to try and resolve it. Kevin D. Case and Davis J. Roberts of Kansas City, Mo., along with Mike Haas of Hoxie, acting on behalf of his private practice, are Heim's attorneys.

Attorneys for Hoss are Janet M. Simpson and Jeffrey A. Bullins of Overland Park.

Wenthe, chief court clerk for the 15th Judicial District, said the last jury trial in Sheridan County was a medical malpractice suit in May 1997, Although a Sheridan County

trial, it took place in Wichita due to a court ordered change of venue.

"We called 14 jurors and seated 12, and paid them \$10 per day plus meals and mileage," Wenthe said. "The cost of that trial was \$1,053.53."

Wenthe said prior to the May 1997 trial, the other most recent trial was in June 1989.

"It was a civil case regarding an accident with a motorcycle," she said. "From 1971 to 1989 there were 22 trials, and since then there's only been the ones I mentioned."

Wenthe said mediation has helped cut down on the number of jury trials the court system is seeing, but taxpayers sustain the cost of jury trials.

According to Rhonda White, deputy clerk, the amount of compensation for the trial in December has not been set.

# Midwest Energy electrifies Oakley

By Patty Decker  
Free Press Editor

Oakley electric customers will join Midwest Energy Friday after a \$2.5 million sale of the city's distribution system.

Under Midwest Energy's rates, residential customers will save about \$190 a year with commercial customers saving more than \$700 a year in electric costs.

"We're pleased to provide our Oakley customer-owners with lower electric rates on day one, and with more reliable electric service in the near future, said Earnie Lehman, president and general manager of Midwest Energy.

"From tree-trimming to rebuilding much of the local dis-

tribution system to constructing new facilities, we are committed to providing first class electric service to these customers," he said.

Oakley Mayor Frank Munk said he thanked the people of Oakley for getting involved in this decision.

"The citizens did their civic responsibility by letting the city council know how they felt on this issue and in which direction they wanted the city to proceed," Munk said.

"We look forward to their input on future decisions."

**Proposal**

The issue went to a public meeting in June between the citizens of Oakley, city council, mayor and representatives of Midwest Energy.

Talks started in March between Oakley's council and Midwest to sell the electric distribution system.

Midwest Energy offered the city \$2.5 million for its aging system which needed an estimated \$1.5 million in upgrades.

Munk said the city was looking at all options for the system which currently services 1,000 meters.

Those meters generated \$1.8 million in utility sales in 2005, but cost the city \$1.9 million to furnish the service.

Midwest Energy has been providing natural gas services to Oakley customers since 1998, said Bob Helm in the Hays office.

"We will begin operating the electric system Friday," he said.

# Prairie Dog Creek, Sebelius Lake watershed meeting to be in Colby

Norton County Conservation District is sponsoring a WRAPS (Watershed Restoration And Protection Strategy) project for the Prairie Dog Creek and Keith Sebelius Lake watershed.

Watershed Restoration is needed to restore the health of rivers, streams, and lakes that do not meet water quality standards and protection goals are needed to ensure the water quality does not deteriorate

and will be protected from pollution in the future.

The WRAPS process involves four goals.

The first goal is to recognize rivers, streams, and lakes in a watershed that provide drinking water, water for agricultural uses, recreation, and other important uses that are in need of restoration and protection. The first goal has determined the Prairie Dog Creek/Keith

Sebelius Lake is in need of protection and restoration.

The second goal is to assess the watershed to determine potential pollution sources and water quality problems. Based on this information, landowners, local residents, government agencies, and other concerned parties will work together on a leadership team to establish watershed management goals for the restoration and protection of

Prairie Dog Creek/Keith Sebelius Lake watershed. Best management practices will be determined by the leadership team during the third goal.

The final goal will be implementing the action plan. This is a voluntary plan by the landowners. We will offer financial assistance to landowners who want to restore and protect their watershed.

Individuals are needed to be on a

leadership team to help establish goals and best management practices for the Prairie Dog Creek/Keith Sebelius Lake watershed.

Town Hall Conversations will be held

- 11:30 a.m. Monday, Dec. 11, at Quality Inn, 1950 South Range in Colby.
- 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2006 at Lenora City Library, 125 E. Washington in Lenora. Lunch will

be provided.

Reservations are appreciated by Monday. Call the Norton Conservation District at 785-877-2623 ext. 37. Town Hall Conversations will be held in February in Norton and Jennings.

For more information about WRAPS for the Prairie Dog Creek/Keith Sebelius Lake or the leadership team, contact Christa Mulder at 785-877-2623 ext 40.

# Happy Holidays!

## Community Page

## Santa City

Open Weekends: 1-5 p.m.  
After Christmas Parade: Until 8 p.m.  
Dec. 11th-22nd: Open Evenings 6-8 p.m.  
Christmas Eve: 1-3 p.m.

9th Annual

## Christmas Light Parade

5:30 p.m. Sunday, December 3rd

(If participating, line-up will be at 5:00 p.m.)

All parade entries need to check-in at Tina Harris Physical Therapy. You will receive your parade number for judging and get your parade line-up position.

The parade will start at the S. end of Franklin by TNT Auction and will continue on Franklin to Santa City.

Parade registration forms are available at the Chamber office and are due back by 5 p.m. this Friday.

This year's theme is  
"Majic of Christmas"



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