



COLBY FREE PRESS

Brewster store not ready to checkout

By Jan Katz Ackerman
and Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Threat of having no grocery store has rallied Brewster residents to action.

Mayor Mike Baughn said Brewster residents are concerned what will happen in the wake of Shane and Bonnie Holm's announcement they are closing the store at the end of December.

"The Holms have other employment and family commitments so they are closing it," Baughn said. "The Brewster Community Foundation is trying to keep it open."

Holms purchased the store from Art Schindler in March 2003. The store's potential closing has the community grasping at measures to keep it open.

Baughn said members of the Community Foundation met Wednesday to elect a cooperative board to find a way to retain the business relied on heavily by the elderly.

Thirty-eight people from the community were at the meeting, which was facilitated by the community foundation.

Baughn said the outcome was a vote to form Brewster Grocery, Inc. as a non-profit entity to run the store. Memberships were also created at \$100 each.

Brewster Grocery, Inc., will purchase the store from the Holms, and it will be open Jan. 1. A Brewster Grocery Inc. board was also elected. Elected to three-year terms were Jon Eicher and Baughn; Lawrence Mayer and Natalie Owens to two-year terms; and Arnold Schindler and Doris Quenzer to one-year terms.

The board will hire people to work at the store and set the business hours. An organizational meeting is set for Dec. 11. Lyman

Goetsch from the foundation and Duane Cheney of Western Prairie RC&D helped with the process.

Reva Eicher, a longtime shopper of the grocery store, is concerned about shopping options for elderly residents.

"It would be hard on them and we'd have to find a way to supplement their food," Eicher said. "Especially for those who can't get out to Colby or Goodland."

Eicher said if the store closes she hopes someone in the community steps forward to help the elderly residents buy groceries and supplies.

"It would be nice to find someone to take their shopping list and shop for them," she said.

Eicher is not only concerned about the elderly, but the community as a whole.

"If a school or grocery store in a small town like Brewster closes, a small town deteriorates," she said. "If we loose it, Brewster will no longer be the thriving town it is."

Janet Carpenter manages the grocery store for Shane and Bonnie Holm.

"We are hoping to keep it open," she said. "Mainly for the elderly."

Carpenter said if the Brewster Community Foundation finds a way to keep the store open after December she'll stay on and manage it.

The grocery store has been a viable entity in Brewster since the early 1940s. Originally known as the Co-Op Grocery Store, it was owned for many years by Joe and Dewey Nell Classi.

It sustained damage from a fire during their tenure as owners. They sold the store to Mike Baughn.

Following Baughn, the store was owned by Bob Wallsmith until Schindler purchased it and later sold it to the Holms.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press



First snow

ABOVE: Rob Stithem of Colby scraped ice and snow off his pickup Wednesday in downtown Colby. The area received its first snow of the season. Colby had 1.5 inches. **LEFT:** Light winds Tuesday blanketed the sidewalks of downtown Colby with snow.

Election aftermath: Sheridan County clerk absent from job

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Sheridan County Clerk Paula Bielser has not been at her desk since Nov. 22.

"She hasn't been in the office and I haven't talked to her," Deputy County Clerk Lea Herl said.

Efforts to contact Bielser were unsuccessful.

Herl said she, along with Deputy Virginia Feldt, are running the office.

Asked if Bielser's absence stems from the controversy over the election in which

her husband, Victor Bielser, was involved, Herl said she did not know.

Victor Bielser challenged District No. 1 incumbent county commissioner Ron Schamberger and a controversy arose after election equipment failed to read 50 ballots.

At the close of election night, Schamberger won with 220 votes to Bielser's 214. But, after a recount, which the county's canvassing board refused to certify, Bielser beat Schamberger by seven votes 227 to 220.

The canvassing board was made up of County Commissioners David Zimmer-

man and Keith Kennedy and County Treasurer Esther Bainter, who filled in for Schamberger who recused himself. The board said it did not certify the recount since it did not authorize it, despite Victor Bielser officially asking for and paying for \$400 for it.

The board's action made Schamberger the winner.

Minutes from the commissioner's Nov. 18 special meeting include Paula's involvement with the election.

Commissioners believed the ballot box and related ballot sacks may not have been

secured properly by the election officer who was Paula. They also allege she failed to accept assistance from the equipment company 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.

While the reason Paula has not been in her office is not known, state law does not preclude it due her being an elected official. As an elected official, Bielser's vacation time, sick leave or other reasons for being

out of the office are not established by state law.

A county clerk "shall appoint a deputy county clerk" and file a written statement about the appointment in the clerk's office, according to state law. That same state law says in the absence or disability of a county clerk, or if a vacancy occurs, the deputy county clerk is required to perform all the duties of the clerk until his or her return. Should a permanent vacancy in the office of county clerk occur, the presiding political party is required to nominate someone to the governor's office to fill the spot.

Christmas parade Sunday

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Colby's holiday parade, Magic of Christmas, begins at 5:30 p.m., Sunday.

Now in its ninth year, the Christmas parade will have music for the first time in quite awhile, said Holly Stephens, executive director of the Thomas County/Colby Chamber of Commerce.

"We are so excited about this year's parade with 30 registrations already returned," she said.

Even though the parade is only days away, though, registration forms are still available. With the deadline for entries 5 p.m., Friday, Stephens said nobody will be turned away.

"If someone decides at the last minute that they want to enter something in the parade, they are welcome to do so — we want variety," she said.

Participants will also have a chance to win Chamber gift certificates if they are judged to be the best or second best in one of the five cat-

egories. Categories include best organization; best business; best lit vehicle; best religious and the youth best of show. Entry check-in is 5 p.m. at Tina Harris Physical Therapy, 270 N. Franklin Ave.

This year's judges include Colby Mayor Ken Bieber, Chamber President Todd Stramel and Colby Free Press Publisher John Van Nostrand. The prize for first place in each category is \$50 in gift certificates and \$25 in each category for second place.

Thus far entries have ranged from Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus being chauffeured in a convertible, and a Christmas Globe to nativity scenes, combines, tractors, grocery carts as reindeers and more.

In addition to the "magic" of the parade, Stephens said Sunflower Bank will be offering hot dogs to spectators and College Drive Assembly of God Church will provide hot chocolate for six blocks of the parade route — all free of charge.

The parade route will begin at the south end of Franklin Avenue by TNT Auction and will continue on



FILE PHOTO

Christmas angels were among many children participating at the annual holiday parade.

Franklin Avenue to Santa City in Fike Park.

"The weather on Sunday might be chilly, but temperatures are expected to be about 35 and no wind,"

Stephens said.

The emcee for the event will be Thomas County Commissioner Ron Evans. For questions, call 460-3401.

Health department still has flu vaccine

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Anyone who hasn't received a flu shot still has an opportunity to get one.

Connie Walden, a nurse at the Thomas County Health Department, said about 70 doses of vaccine are still available.

That includes doses suitable for children aged six months and older.

Walden said if children have previously had a flu shot, they only need one dose. If not, they need two shots one month apart for the best immunity.

Since October, the health department has given about 730 shots. More than 700 were to adults, the rest to children. Many people received shots in November.

"It's never too late to get a shot," Walden said.

Last year there were fears of a shortage of available flu vaccine,

“It's never too late to get a shot.”

Connie Walden, RN

like in 2004, but that has not been an issue this year.

Besides getting a flu shot, there are a few simple ways to help avoid getting the virus.

Walden said hand-washing can help stop the spread of the flu, as well as not covering one's mouth with their hands when coughing and sneezing. She recommends using the elbow instead of the hand.

A healthy diet and exercise also help.

Walden said the symptoms of the flu include a fever, body aches and respiratory symptoms such as coughing, sneezing and congestion.

To receive a flu shot, call the health department at 460-4596.