

COLBY PRESS

Volume 118, Number 13 Serving Thomas County since 1888

County considers second van

<u>By Tisha Cox</u>

Thomas County residents who

get an improve-Thomas County Commissioners ap-

proved submitting a grant application to the Kansas Department of Transportation at their



meeting Monday for a new van. Deputy county clerk Barb Hopper said the current van, a 2000 Ford, has more than 81,000 miles.

far along they start to need repair work," she said. The van is starting to need more

"They realize once they get that

repairs and the county decided it is time to get a new vehicle. A newer van would allow taking people to appointments in Hays or

Garden City, while the older van could be used in Colby. The county is considering \$51,150 for a 13-passenger raisedroof van, which includes a wheel-

chair lift and restraint system. Hopper said the van isn't just for senior citizens, but anyone who needs transportation — for a doctor's appointment, to getting lunch

or groceries. The Senior Progress Center dispatches the van five days a week, mainly around Colby. The cost for riders is a donation of \$1.

"I foresee we can accommodate Hays and Garden City," she said.

Hopper said Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong, Mayor Ken Bieber, the commissioners and others have lent their support to the grant application.

The county will find out if the

grant was approved in June. In other county news...

Commissioners approved a new snowblower for the courthouse and Thomas County Office Complex. A tracked snowblower for \$1,500-\$1,700 was recommended.

Jim McGuire, custodian, told the commissioners it is getting harder to find parts for the 1983 snowblower used at the office complex. "The whole thing is getting pretty

worn out," he said.

The old snowblower will be kept as a backup.

A salary issue was also resolved. Commissioners had tabled a request at their Jan. 15 meeting to increase the salary of Jim Engel, county emergency management director.

Engel had requested it because he has taken on additional responsi-

The commissioners approved increasing his salary from \$27,310

to \$28,000. The commissioners went into executive session 15 minutes with Lisa Molstad, Thomas County Health Department administrator, to discuss personnel issues. No ac-

tion was taken. The location of where Western Prairie RC&D is moving was also

The group is moving out of its offices at the office complex in April, and for several months, it was unknown where they were moving.

RC&D is moving to the Farm Service Agency building on South her salary was bumped another treasurer Esther Bainter's by Country Club Drive.

on Groundhog Day whether to force some dents compete with cattle for grass to for- hogs, are members of the squirrel family. western Kansas ranchers to move their

> eradication attempts support a federal effort to reintroduce the endangered blackfooted ferret to the area. Prairie dogs are a

A hearing on the county's request for a plaints from numerous residents about the and landowners to remove the cattle from

Defendants in the lawsuit include ranch-

Gordon Barnhardt; Maxine Blank, an 80year-old Utah woman who rents land to the Haverfields in Russell Springs; Donald and Lillian Becker, who have resisted poisoning efforts; and Dixie Surratt, who owns a

Haverfields and Barnhardt, said Tuesday

ents' property rights.

"It's like the world getting turned upside down for these people," Rathbun said, adding that a storm over the long New Year's weekend that dumped up to 3 feet of snow in some areas already has hurt ranchers. "After the snow storm they lost cattle, and now they have to deal with this."

Last month, the county ordered Haverfield to move his cattle so it could apply a Randy Rathbun, an attorney for the poison that's dangerous to livestock. The county said if the cows were not moved, it

"That's why I'm elected, I'm here eriff, Hessel Anderson at \$24,500, and holidays, which is up 5 cents

School board gives students, staff a day off

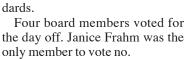
By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Students and staff in the Colby School District earned an extra day

off this semester. On Monday, the school board approved Friday, Feb. 23, as a day off after students met Adequate Yearly Progress for No Child Left Behind, and high marks on the 2006 state assessments.

No Child Left Behind is a federal program requiring all public schools to meet certain academic standards.



T. Rogers

J. Frahm

Board members Dewey August- choices. ine and Kevan Taylor were absent because of illness.

The day-off reward was proposed last year as an incentive to try to improve performance on the state assessments.

It worked.

High school principal Rocky Robbins said some of the older students, especially at the high school, need an incentive to perform better.

Reading scores on the assessment improved.

'That's a trend we'd like to con-year. tinue," he said.

all the time, and sometimes it is necessary to dangle an incentive."

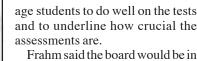
Board president Tracy Rogers said he would like to see students in school instead of out — but understands the need for the incentive. "A day off would make the most to spring break. The timing is

impact," he said.

Robb Ross, middle school principal, said it is important to encour- way, and it's a win-win situation.

We would be precedent-setting and expected to repeat this. There will be no going back without hard feelings"

Janice Frahm, school board member



new territory if it approved the day "We would be precedent-setting

and expected to repeat this," she She said the community needs to be aware of the students' achievement, but would like to see more

variety when it comes to incentive Feb. 23 is the first day of the state

wrestling tournament. Snow days were also a concern. The district closed school four days because of a snowstorm before Christmas break, and after the New Year's Day weekend storm.

Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said the district's calendar has more than enough hours to accommodate the snow days and the day off.

The state requires students to be in school 1,116 hours during the

Frahm said if not all the buildings "Not all students try their hardest make the standard next year, there

will be problems. "There will be no going back

without hard feelings," she said. Activities Director Larry Gabel

weighed in with his opinion. "It's a long time from Christmas

good," he said. "Many students are gone any

Sheridan County nurse receives \$3,000

Furry

friends

ABOVE: Kaylee Keck zipped

her poodle, Jazz, into a coat

during a dog obedience class

at the 4-H Building Tuesday.

RIGHT: Zack May and his re-

triever Buddy, left, and Seth

Bredemeier and his spaniel

Hershey practiced "heeling."

The obedience classes are

for 4-H members and the pub-

lic, and started last week.

Dogs as young as 5 or 6

months old are eligible for the

class. Owners learn how to

socialize their dogs, and be-

havior control. 4-H members

work on obedience, show-

manship and agility, which

are all skills used in dog

shows and competitions.

Colby Free Press

Sheridan County taxpayers will spend nearly \$3,000 more in 2007 for a public health nurse than they did in 2006.

Commissioners David Zimmerman, Ron Schamberger and Keith Kennedy on Monday approved Public Health Nurse Melanie Cooper a \$2,275 pay raise. Cooper will make \$32,200 this year, plus receive a cash reimbursement of \$410 each month to apply toward her private health insurance policy.

"Nurses make pretty good money," Zimmerman said Monday. "If you are going to have a nurse you are going to have to pay for it."

Cooper started with the county in November 1999. In 2006, she was paid \$2,100 a month from January to July, and in August when the another \$900 one this year bringing commissioners expanded clinic his salary to \$37,800. Schwarz's hours from 20 to 32 hours per week salary tops 30-plus year county

salary will be \$2,683, which said Monday was the first she had

seen the dollar figure. According to Terri Roberts of the Kansas Nursing Association, Cooper's new salary is higher than most public health nurses across the state. Roberts said data compiled for the latest wage survey done in 2005 lists registered nurses, including those serving as county health nurses, making between \$19.73 and \$20.10 per hour in areas other than Kansas City, Lawrence, Topeka and

Receiving the second highest pay raise is Bob Schwarz, head of the road and bridge department.

Schwarz started with the county in August 2005. Four months later he received a \$900 raise, and gets

As of Monday, Cooper's monthly which brings her up to \$27,700. equates to \$20.96 an hour. Cooper Bielser is the only county official forced to take a pay cut in 2007.

TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

According to a resolution listing department heads and deputies, the commissioners cut Bielser's salary by \$400 to \$27,000. She will continue to receive 7.5 percent of her gross clerk pay for duties as election officer, that being \$2,025.

should be doing and isn't putting in the time we think she should be there," Zimmerman said.

Bielser disagrees.

"I've been in this office 20 years and I can tell you the times I've taken two weeks off at a time," Bielser said. "I took two weeks off week off last November.'

Bielser said she does not keep track of her hours because she works whatever it takes to get the

\$10,100, despite her \$700 increase to serve the public," she said.

County Appraiser David Stithem Sheridan County Clerk Paula and County Attorney Mike Haas ginia Feldt and Lea Herl have were not given raises for 2007. Stithem's salary will remain at \$40,000 and Haas, remains at \$20,500.

The commissioners for the third year in a row left their own salary at \$10,400. However, like Cooper, Schamberger and Zimmerman take home cash reimbursements each "She isn't doing the job she month of \$587, equal to 50 percent of Kennedy's family plan health insurance policy valued at \$1,175.

> To date, two other employees receive a cash reimbursement toward their private health insurance policy each month, one receiving \$410 and the other \$111.

Register of Deeds Kari Weis and in 1999 after surgery and I took one Emergency Medical Service Director Deb Kaufman received a \$600 raise, up to \$26,700 and Kaufman's to \$26,600. Sheriff Brian Fenner will earn

job done, even nights or weekends. \$34,000; followed by his undershand Deputy Jan Long at \$23,970.

County Clerk Deputy Clerks Virswitched jobs. Feldt works full time and receives a salary of \$21,100, while Herl is part time and is paid \$10.40 per hour, up 25 cents from what Feldt was making.

Two deputies receiving \$490 raises are Shirley Niermeier in the treasurer's office and Carla More in the appraiser's office. Both ladies, along with Paulette Feldt, road and bridge secretary, will earn \$21,600 in 2007. Steve Newell, custodian, will see an increase of \$400, making his salary \$17,700.

The county starts employees at an hourly wage of \$8.35, with the highest wage currently at \$11.80, all of which received a 25 cent per hour raise. Receiving less than that were those individuals who carry a pager for the emergency medical service. For each hour a pager is carried, a person is paid \$1.20 per hour weekdays and \$1.35 an hour weekends

Logan County commissioners file lawsuit to poison prairie dogs OAKLEY (AP) — A judge could decide holes and tunneling. They also say the ro- Groundhog Day. Prairie dogs, like groundthat's safe for cattle — and bill Haverfield

cattle so Logan County officials can poison prairie dogs. County commissioners filed a lawsuit Jan. 10 in Logan County District Court against ranchers and landowners who have

fought their efforts to eradicate prairie dogs. The county says it has received comprairie dogs, which farmers and ranchers Some people who oppose the county's ers Larry and Elizabeth Haverfield and

main food source for the ferrets.

temporary injunction forcing the ranchers large ranch in far southeast Logan County. any lands while the county applies rodensay destroy pastures and fields by digging ticide is scheduled for Feb. 2, which is that he hopes the judge will honor his cli-

would spread a more expensive poison of their holes."

for the higher cost.

When Haverfield ignored the demand, the commissioners turned the matter over to the court. The law suit claims Haverfield moved the cows intentionally to stop the county. Even if a judge grants the county's request for an injunction, Commissioner Carl Uhrich said the snow means it could be a month before prairie dog towns are accessible. "It hasn't melted any," he said. "It's just ice. Most of them haven't dug out