



# From basketballs to bands

## Colby Recreation Department says community building won't miss a beat or a bounce with proposed college center



COLBY FREE PRESS FILE PHOTOS



**ABOVE:** Youth attempt crowd-surfing during the New Year's Eve concert and party held Dec. 31, 2005, at the Colby Community Building. **RIGHT:** A Colby High Eagle basketball player goes up for shot during a game also played at the community building. The Colby Community Building is used for a variety of events. Colby Recreation Department, which schedules events at the building, expects events to continue if Colby Community College's new facility is built.

**By John Van Nostrand**  
*Colby Free Press Publisher*

Should Colby Community College's proposed gymnasium and wellness center be built, that won't mean the Colby Community Building will start collecting dust.

"It's not going to shut down the Colby Community Building," said Ryan Sturdy, recreation director for the city of Colby.

The college is proposing a new gymnasium, wellness center and other amenities on its campus. Financing for the \$15 million center is expected to be on the April 3 ballot. Should the center be approved and built, the college's basketball, volleyball and wrestling teams will move their games to the center.

Sturdy expects some body or organization will take the college's place at the building.

"It will open up avenues," he said. "We can have more concerts and craft fairs but on a bigger scale."

The community building's rental policy is a first-come, first-serve basis. Sturdy said he meets with coaches and athletic directors of both Colby Community College and Colby High School to determine the dates for basketball, volleyball and wrestling events. The college's volleyball program plays at the community building.

"Just this week, I got the college's 2007-2008 schedule," Sturdy said. "I try to get them as early as I can."

After those dates have been set, Sturdy schedules other events, like concerts and shows. Sturdy said it is rare for events to be turned away because of an available date.

"It depends," he said. "For a concert, someone calls and they have three or four dates in mind. Normally, we can accommodate. It just depends on what else is going on."

Winter months are usually the most difficult time to schedule events at the community building. Colby college team's practice at the building as well.

When Colby college or Colby High is not playing, Sturdy said events at the building range from

craft fairs, gun shows, business-related meetings and even family reunions. Some of those events are held every year in Colby.

Mike Fell, general manager of Colby radio stations KXXX and KQLS, said the proposed center will bring more opportunity to Colby. The radio stations have sponsored concerts and other events at the community building.

"From a concert point of view, with a 2,400 seat place we can bring in higher levels of entertainer. We would have seating capacity to afford more high-profile entertainers."

Fell said with the center funded by tax dollars, he does not see a reason why the college board would not want other groups to use the center.

"I expect that same access," he said.

This year will be the stations' 17th annual Better Home and Living Show held at the community building.

"We have had no complaints about the community building. The community building serves its purpose for us. I just look at size. With a larger place and more seating, our events can be even be on a larger scale."

Should the college's center be built, Sturdy expects even more events to come to Colby. Sturdy said Colby would be a great location for a statewide youth basketball organization tournament.

"We could have seven gyms with the new center," he said.

The Colby Community Building was approved by Colby voters 427-395 in April 1954. The value of the building was \$350,000. The Colby Community Building can hold 1,832 people for a basketball game.

Colby Community College women's basketball coach Tom Stephens said during his 10 years as coach, some recruits lost interest in Colby after they visited the community building.

During his first year as coach, Stephens gave a tour of the community building locker room to a re-

## Petition starts ballot

According to election laws related to Colby Community College's wellness center proposal, the college board of trustees can approve increases in property taxes to fund the center if a petition to put the entire funding issue on the April 3 ballot is not submitted.

Those in opposition to the funding have until March 5 to submit a petition to the Thomas County Courthouse.

The petition, stating the ballot question, must include 5 percent of the registered voters' signatures from the Nov. 6, 2006, election.

That equates to 130 names.

By the way she acted, Stephens said he could tell she lost enthusiasm in Colby.

Stephens took things into his own hands - literally. Late in his first year, he spent about \$8,000 to remodel the locker room. Former Colby men's basketball coaches have also made improvements to the locker room.

With Colby's three teams using the same court, practice time can run late in to the night. With two gyms at the center, practice times won't be as spread out.

Stephens said he is in favor of the center because it could bring many more activities to town. For years, Colby teams have played in the Jayhawk Shootout basketball tournament. This season it was played in Coffeyville, in extreme southeast Kansas. Stephens said the shootout has a large attendance. Colby does not have the adequate facilities for it.

He said Coffeyville and Garden City are the two best places to play the shootout.

"You need two gyms," he said.

## Stadium on track

**By Tisha Cox**  
*Colby Free Press*

Even though it might not look like it, work on the new stadium at Dennen Field is still going on.

Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said CBS Constructors of McCook, Neb., is fabricating the seats for the stadium. The company was awarded the stadium bid in November, with a bid of \$99,500.

Nielsen said no work is going on at Dennen Field right now because of the snow, and no work is expected until spring, as planned.

With the departure of head football coach Bob Ray in December, the district lost his assistance with the project.

Ray had volunteered, along

with assistant coach Brad Wildeman, to build the new press box.

Nielsen said Wildeman is still expected to help, along with the district's maintenance staff.

As far as the stadium itself is concerned, it's still on track.

"The Booster Club was always going to help with that," he said.

The old stadium has been partially dismantled, with wood being removed from the frame. The rest of the disassembly will happen after the snow melts.

"I don't foresee any problems with seating during track season because bleachers are being left on the south side of the field," Nielsen said.

If needed, more seating can be brought in.

## County health follows whooping cough

**By John Van Nostrand**  
*Colby Free Press Publisher*

Thomas County Health Department is investigating the spread of whooping cough cases since Jan. 10.

Four cases have been confirmed in people from 3 to 15 years old. The fourth case was confirmed Thursday.

"It's important folks are aware that we do have an increased recent incidence of pertussis. They need to make sure their immunizations are up-to-date," said Lisa Molstad, Thomas County Health Administrator. "This is not a disease outbreak, but we are working closely with the state to monitor the situation."

Whooping cough, formally known as pertussis, is a bacteria spread through nose and throat discharges. Persons infected are contagious from seven to 10 days after exposed during which time they may have no symptoms. Symptoms, including the cough, may take a week or more to develop. Once treatment has begun, people can still be contagious.

Thomas County Health staff is tracking people who may have been exposed. These first three cases in Thomas County resulted in more than 65 reported contacts who may have been exposed.

"We have notified all of these people and made sure they under-



THOMAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

Thomas County Health Department staff members Connie Walden, left, and Kathy Ryan map out the exposure potential related to the four confirmed cases of whooping cough. The contagious illness, highlighted by a severe cough, has spread since Jan. 10.

stand the situation," said Connie Walden, a registered nurse with Thomas County Health Department.

Kathy Ryan, a 26-year veteran of public health nursing, says disease investigations similar to this current

one are critical.

"We are here to help protect and educate the public. Pertussis can be a very serious disease in infants and children. A cough lasting two weeks or more with the characteristic whoop or vomiting as a result of the

coughing is one of the determining factors along with a positive culture for the bacteria," she said.

For more information or to schedule an immunization, please call the Thomas County Health Department at 785-460-4596.

## The Best Of

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