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Nader: Global warming is real threat

Lecture focuses on motivating individuals, groups to get involved

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Global warming is here, and needs to be addressed now. And people can do something about it, said Ralph Nader, consumer rights advocate and former presidential candidate.

Nader spoke more than two hours Tuesday as part of the Colby Community College Dr. Max Pickerill Lecture Series.

"It's here," Nader said. "It's here faster than scientists expected."

Over the past 15 years, the planet has experienced some of its hottest years ever.

"It's a paralysis of society," he said. "People don't think it's real."

Evidence is everywhere — from melting permafrost in Alaska to receding glaciers in the South American Andes and ice shelves breaking apart in Antarctica.

Wild fluctuations in weather, hurricanes, and frigid weather are also proof.

"We're also seeing it in the insects receding or advancing and plants," Nader said.

People believe they cannot do anything about global warming or other problems. They have been lead to think they are helpless and powerless against corporations and the government.

However, they need to find the motivation to starting doing something and stop making excuses.

"No more excuses if we respect the future generations that will fol-

low," he said.

Environmental groups tackle the problem the wrong way, but pointing up at the sky instead of focusing on the ground.

"That's the wrong way to start," Nader said. "It's too remote from people's lives."

If the focus was how people could save money with more efficient car engine or building design, or less pollution, it would bring the issue home.

"People like to get more money for their consumer value," he said.

By making it something within their own experience, people would understand.

Politicians, instead, try to draw attention away from global warming by saying it is nonsense, or scientists aren't certain what causes it.

But it is happening, and costing trillions in environmental damage, causing cancer and a multitude of problems.

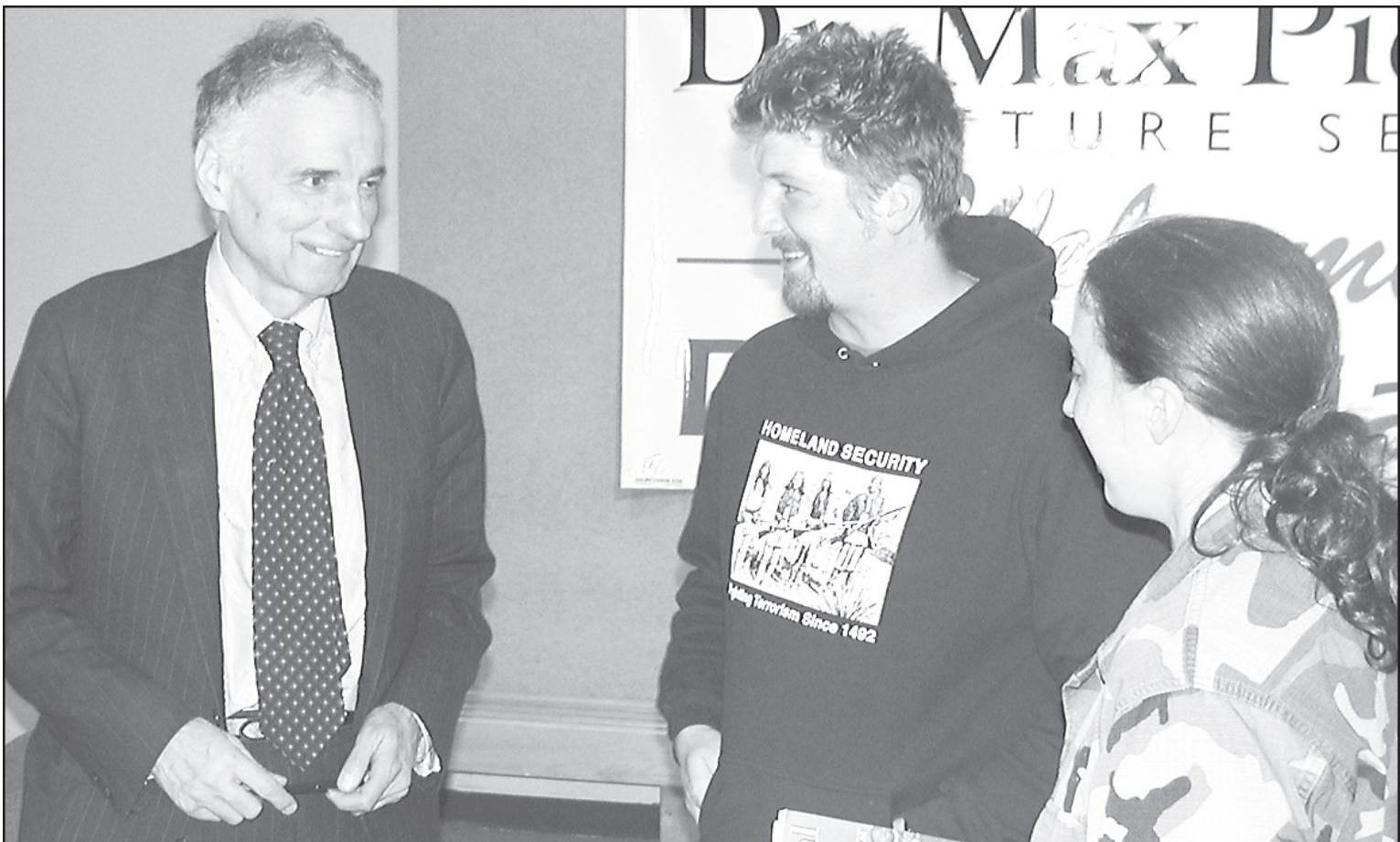
"It's costing us now," Nader said. "It's not something in the future."

Continued use of coal and fossil fuels are the problem, and attitudes that refuse to change.

Nader said inefficiency of electrical generating plants and car engines need to be dealt with.

"Cars in the 1930s were more efficient than today's," he said. "We're dealing with stagnant technology."

Japanese automakers have left American companies in the dust with cars like the Toyota Prius and Honda hybrids.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Ralph Nader, left, visited with J.D. Frazier, center, and Jessica Morton, right, both of Colby, after his lecture at Colby Community

College Tuesday. Nader spoke as part of the Dr. Max Pickerill Lecture Series.

Instead, American automakers chose "stylistic and horsepower pornography" over fuel efficiency. Japan has a fuel efficiency standard of 42 mpg; Europe, 41. The

U.S. has not changed since 1980, when its standard was set at 25 mpg, and it has continued to fall.

"We bought into it, didn't we?" he said. "Engineers could have built

cars to lead the world, but executives were driving their own companies into the ground."

Congress is beginning to talk about global warming, but the auto

companies balk at change.

"There's a lack of action there," Nader said.

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Proposed center gets county support

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners agreed to put their support behind a proposed youth center in Colby. The commissioners approved signing a letter of support at their meeting Monday.

Todd Stramel and Brian Staats presented plans for the center.

Staats said they are applying for state tax credits for the project.

"This is one of the means to entice people to contribute," he said. "We are not asking for county money."

Staats said they waited to come to the commissioners after the April 3 city-school election because they wanted to see how the college wellness center proposal fared.

"This is a different focus," he said.

A fundraising group was hired to help raise money for the project.

Activities that would not conflict with existing services were chosen.

The center includes plans inside for a laser tag area, skating rink, commons area and climbing wall.

They have had land offered to be donated, but Staats declined to say who offered the land and where it is.

"We're going to proceed one way or another," he said.

Work on the center will not start until they have the money in hand to cover the expenses. Costs are estimated at \$750,000 to \$1.5 million for a 40,000-square-foot facility.

In other business, the commissioners heard from Lisa Molstad, director of the Thomas County Health Department.

Molstad is planning on having vaccination clinics for middle and high school students.

"I found out they need our help," she said.

The health department will pur-

Recognizing special month



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Members of Colby Girl Scout Troops 201 and 218 put up a poster at Pioneer Memorial Library Tuesday in honor of Child Abuse Awareness Month in April. The girls made the "paper quilt," which is bordered in blue, the color used to raise awareness. The poster will be on display throughout the month of April.

Grinnell School Board ends agreement with Grainfield

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Faculty, staff, patrons and students of two area schools are holding their breath as they wait for newly elected board members to take office.

The April 3 election ended with three new board members in Grinnell which may turn the tide on a cooperative agreement made late last year with Wheatland School District in Grainfield.

Grinnell Board Clerk Joyce

Baalman said at Monday night's board meeting Ben Dickman, vice president of the board, made a motion to terminate the agreement made between Grinnell and Grainfield on Dec. 26.

The agreement expands the cooperative agreement which in the 1980s merged sporting programs between the two districts.

The revised agreement would mean students in grades 9 through 12 would go to school in Grainfield, grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 would attend school at Grinnell, and both towns

would keep their pre-kindergarten through grades 4.

In December, Duane Vollbracht, president of Grinnell's board, along with Gary Ostmeier, Francis Rudell and Scott Wellbrock voted in favor of the broader cooperative agreement. Jody Beckman, Don Albers and Dickman voted against it.

At Monday's meeting, Dickman's effort to force a stop to the agreement was voted on the same against as it was in favor. Vollbracht, Rudell, Wellbrock and Ost-

meyer voting against, and Dickman, Beckman and Albers voting in favor of the stop.

Following initiation of the expanded agreement, Dickman and two residents, Jacquelyn Teeter and Marlene Wolf, sued Gove County Attorney Mark Schmiedler and Gove County Clerk Julie Hawkey for not filing paperwork for a recall vote of Vollbracht, Wellbrock, and Rudell on the April 3 ballot. A case in Gove County District Court, the case was dismissed, but Dickman, Teeter and Wolf then filed a civil

suit against Schmiedler, listing Vollbracht and Wellbrock as the ones they want recalled. Rudell failed in his bid for re-election, and neither Dickman or Ostmeier ran for re-election April 3.

There are those among the community who support the expanded cooperative agreement.

"Speaking as a parent and cheer-leading sponsor," Baalman said, "it worked. I think the whole thing could have worked."

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Charter school getting reprieve

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Colby School District's charter school will continue another year.

The Colby School Board approved funding the school at its meeting Monday. The vote passed 6-1 with board member Kevan Taylor voting no. "I think the charter school is great. It does a great job for the students involved," Taylor said.

Since 2005, Colby's charter school provides an alternative to the regular classroom, allowing students to learn at their own pace. According to staff, it has worked well for students who need more time to learn concepts, and those who need more of a challenge.

But finances were the reason for his vote.

"It is not fair to be spending so much on one aspect compared to what the district pays for the schooling of the rest of the district's students. There are many other ways to spend that money," Taylor said.

The board did not specify how much it would contribute to the charter school although grants have been applied for. Taylor is concerned about the district's other needs.

Transportation and technology needs have been at the forefront of recent board discussions. The district needs to replace computers and a couple of activity buses.

"Before we commit to spend more on the charter school, the school board and administration need to sit down and prioritize what we need to spend money on," Taylor said.

"What then?" Taylor said. "At some point we can't do all that."

Board member Gerry Fulwider made the motion that they "make it work."

At their March 12 meeting, the board discussed the charter school's future. State funding ended in December and the district has had to fund the school since. The state reworked its budget year, forcing money for charter schools to be spent by districts during the first semester.

The state renewed the school's charter for five more years. Diana Wieland, curriculum director and charter school principal, is confident the board can come up with the money. The district has applied for a \$50,000 grant from the state, which would help cover operating costs.

With the support of the school board and the state, Wieland can now move forward with finding funding and recruiting more students.

Eighteen students in fifth through eighth grades are enrolled. Plans originally called for the school to accommodate two additional grades each year until the 12th

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