



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Towns look at future

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

City of Hoxie officials talked with Sheridan County officials during Monday's commission meeting to start looking for a way to build for the future.

"This is how a community is made up," said Terry Woodbury, president of Kansas Communities L.L.C. of Leoti. Woodbury described a "public square" which includes four sectors - business, government, education and health and human services.

"By in large," Woodbury said. "People fit into more than one sector."

Woodbury talked at a joint session attended by Hoxie Mayor Lori Horesky, City Commissioners Jim Erwin and Troy Dewey and Sheridan County Commissioners Keith Kennedy, Doyle Kauk and Ron Schamberger.

Woodbury said his company helps people become "very good at working together."

Jessica Spresser, interim economic development director, also Hoxie's city clerk, asked Woodbury to explain how his company does strategic planning.

"Part of it is getting citizens involved," Woodbury said.

"By in large, we have been slipping over the past 40 years and it's being seen in churches, civic groups and voting.

The biggest culprits are television and not shopping locally."

Should Hoxie and Sheridan County residents decide to use Woodbury's company for strategic planning they would need to raise \$3,000 seed money for what might be a two-year process.

Once the seed money is raised, Woodbury said, the Kansas Department of Commerce and Kansas Health Foundation would match up to \$7,500 to carry out goals 40 that citizens and selected leaders found necessary to help the county thrive.

"If small towns don't get involved in helping save themselves they risk being lost," Woodbury said.

Woodbury is conducting strategic planning in Greensburg.

He said while Greensburg residents are in a different situation than Sheridan County and Hoxie residents, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius asked him to help in Greensburg so the town's people "don't get taken advantage of over money" coming into the community since the May 4 tornado which destroyed the town.

Schamberger, a member of Sheridan County's economic development board, asked Woodbury whether sessions he leads ever seem like mediation sessions.

"Its design for this community is to address (Hoxie and Sheridan County) issues and engage their assets."

Woodbury said other communities in northwest and western Kansas which have used his company include Decatur, Sherman, Greeley and Hodgeman counties.

He said he will not begin to think of helping a community or county until residents themselves make a commitment to be positive about their assets, such as the businesses, schools or health care facilities.

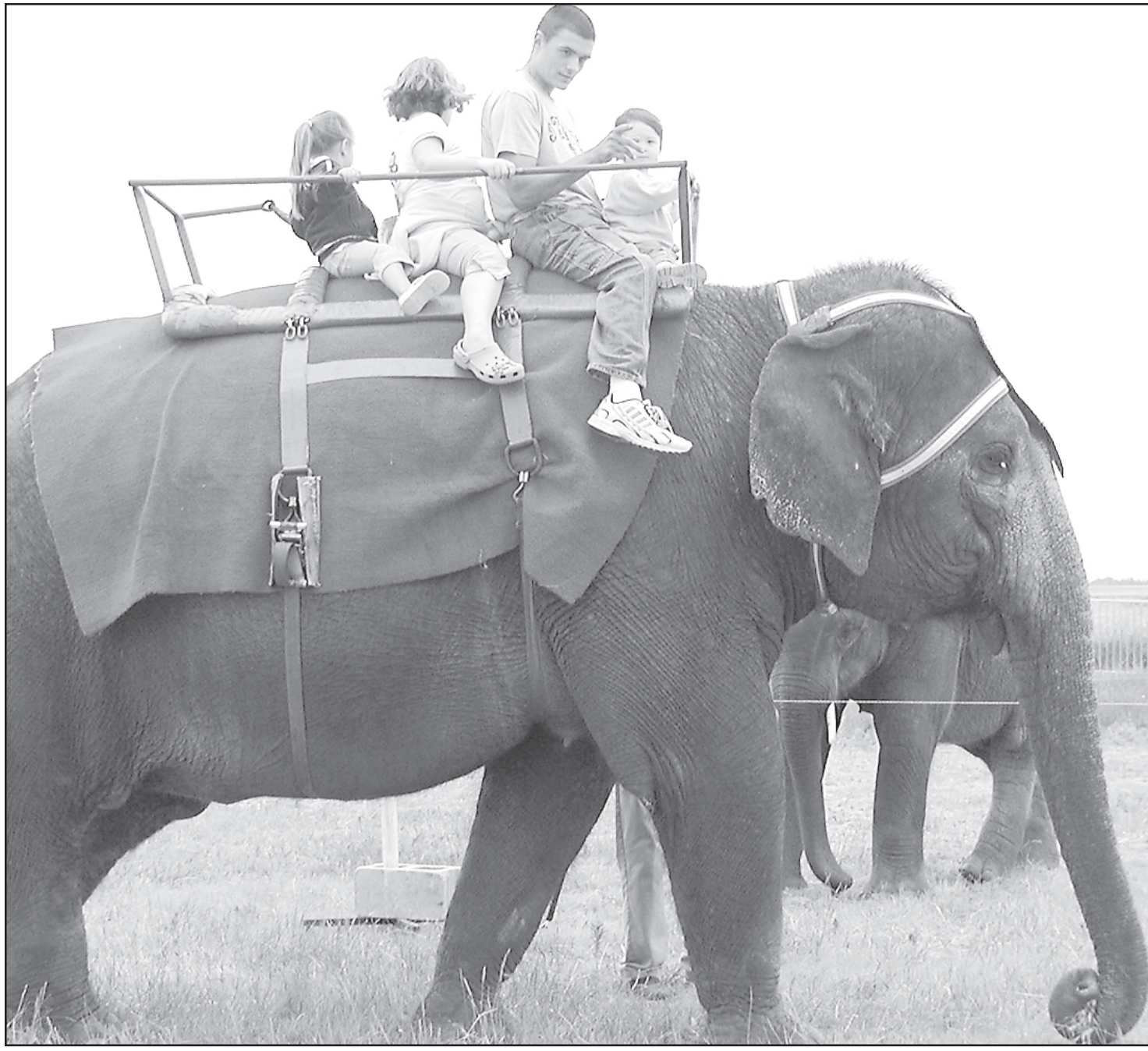
"I can't fix something unless a community is willing to be committed," Woodbury said.

Spresser said she has received favorable input from people she has talked to about using strategic planning to move the county and city of Hoxie forward.

She also said Decatur County residents involved in strategic planning will be in Hoxie sometime in July to talk about what the process has done for their county.

Woodbury said the commissioners at both the city and county levels would have to decide and get back with him.

## It's a jungle out there



Some kids took a ride on an elephant Tuesday while the Carson and Barnes Circus performed in Colby.

JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

## Insurance highlights county meeting

By Tisha Cox  
Colby Free Press

Health insurance premiums are known to regularly increase. But this year, the cost of health insurance for Thomas County employees is going down.

Charles Krull with Blue Cross, Blue Shield gave a presentation at the commissioners meeting Monday. He presented three insurance options the county can choose from.

Chairman Ken Christiansen was surprised the cost of insurance is going down, at least this once.

"We're looking at a slight decrease in charges this year," Christiansen said. "We're very fortunate it went down. We weren't expecting that."

County Clerk Shelly Harms said the rate is decreasing \$35 a month for both individuals and families. The cost is down slightly because there were not many large claims during the past year. Current rates are \$339.97 per month for an individual, which the county pays.

Rates per month are \$655.06 for an employee and child; \$730.04 for an employee and spouse and \$1,045.99 for an employee and family.

For each of those, the employee portion is \$315.09, \$390.07 and \$75.12 respectively. The county pays the rest.

Harms said since she became county clerk, the price of insurance has gone up each year. The commissioners will give the three plans to the department heads, who will talk with their employees, and then decide what option they want.

In other business, the commissioners heard budget requests. Work on the 2008 budget begins next month.

The Thomas County Extension Council, Thomas County Conservation District, Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Inc., and the Western Kansas Child Advocacy Center all made requests.

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## Accident sends one to hospital

A two-vehicle wreck Tuesday sent a Colby resident to Citizens Medical Center.

The wreck happened at 1:05 p.m. on South Range Avenue and Willow Street near McDonald's.

Charles Eugene Monroe, 54, of Loveland, Colo., was driving his 1993 Dodge Van west on Willow Street. Monroe's van was hit by a 2000 Oldsmobile driven by Sarah Ritchey, 20, of Colby.

Ritchey was taken to Citizens Medical Center with injuries.

The Kansas Highway Patrol said Ritchey was not wearing a seatbelt and Monroe was uninjured in the crash.

According to the Kansas Highway Patrol, Monroe failed to yield the right of way.

## Brewster restaurant back for seconds

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

A Brewster resident has opened the café once owned by her mother.

Last week, Candy Aschenbrenner Bryant, 32, opened the doors of A Café, 323 Kansas Ave., in Brewster.

Bryant's mother, Juanita Aschenbrenner, opened A Cafe in 1993, the year Bryant graduated from Brewster High School.

It closed in 1997.

"The town needed a café and my

folks asked me to open it," Bryant said.

For the past year, Bryant said she has been teaching math and science at the Thomas County Academy, a charter school in Colby.

Before teaching in Colby, Bryant was the kitchen manager of the Applebee's restaurant in Dodge City.

"I miss the city life," Bryant said, "but Brewster is a great place for kids."

Bryant said while her children, Hope Hayden, 13; Brian Hayden,

12; Morgan Bryant, 5; and Erica Bryant, 3, are not old enough to work in the café, she will have high school students on staff through the summer. Bryant said the menu is American and traditional, from eggs and pancakes for breakfast to a hamburger for lunch.

"We'll start with a limited menu at first and it will probably expand," she said. Mayor Mike Baughn said he's pleased Bryant decided to open the café.

"We are very pleased to have an eating establishment again," he

said. "It's been a while and we were hoping someone would take the initiative to open it."

Baughn is a member of the group of Brewster residents which banned together to reopen the grocery store last year.

He said the grocery store has been serving lunches through its deli-catessen known as the Dawg Dish, but with the café's opening lunches will no longer be served at the grocery store.

"We wish Ms. Bryant all the success in the world," Baughn said.

## Are wheat crop not as promising

Michelle Myers  
Free Press Intern

It's been a long seven years for Kansas farmers.

The drought dried up their crops, hail chopped them down, wind flattened them, and tornadoes wiped them clean off, among other things.

However, this is the first spring the area has had since that first year of drought, and local farmers were looking hopeful.

"Six weeks ago, there was not a bad field in the county, but now we see a lot of stressed fields," said Steve Ziegelmeier, broker for ZEZ Commodities and a farmer. The main culprits have been wind, hail and rust.

County officials are not optimistic about dryland wheat and irrigated wheat could still be average to above average depending on spraying for insects and other factors.

"It (wheat) was looking pretty good with all the snow, but unfortunately with the wind and hail, the drier wheat hasn't been up to its potential," said Brian Olson, Thomas County Extension Office researcher. "So it's not outstanding, but still respectable yields."

Mark Myers, who farms southeast of Thomas County, agrees.

"Freeze damage was minimal, and non-existent in Thomas County," he said. "The wheat is maturing

very fast with the hot winds we had last week. And with the rust the wheat got, and the lack of moisture, it is maturing very quickly."

While farmers would like to see about 20 more inches of rain this summer, it would still be too late to help the wheat crop.

"I think there will be really good places to harvest, and some places that won't be worth cutting at all," said Myers.

As for what farmers can do with the crop they have, Olson offered some advice.

"It's all in nature's hands, so we can't do anything about it. It'll be average at best so far for Thomas and Rawlins county," said Olson.

"It's a little disappointing, that's all," said Olson.

Many local farmers haven't seen a yield that could bring in 100 bushels in years, and some were looking at fields with the potential of producing up to 120 bushels of wheat before the wind and hail came.

Russ Martin, service technician, said that Colby probably has the worst wheat crop

"Colby is probably the worst, especially with rust and getting only an inch and a half of rain.

It's still green, but some places are starting to look a little yellow," said Martin.

Not only does the area suffer because of the lack of rain, but, "Rust has been an epidemic."



MICHELLE MYERS/Colby Free Press

An area farmer showed a good wheat head from one of his fields. The wheat harvest will begin by the end of the month.

"It looks really good, but then it took off 30-40 percent of the yield," said Martin.

"North of town is pretty good with 50-55 bushels of wheat, but then it starts to go downhill the closer to Colby with 25-30 bushels. Mingo will probably bring in 45-50 bushels, and the best is around Oakley, which will have about 65-70 bushels."

Fortunately, there is still hope for farmers.

"The prices are decent - a little higher right now, which is kind of unusual for this time of year. It's reminiscent of what happened last year," said Ziegelmeier.

Many farmers believe harvest will hit in about two weeks. For Ziegelmeier, he said he believes cutting will begin by June 23.

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