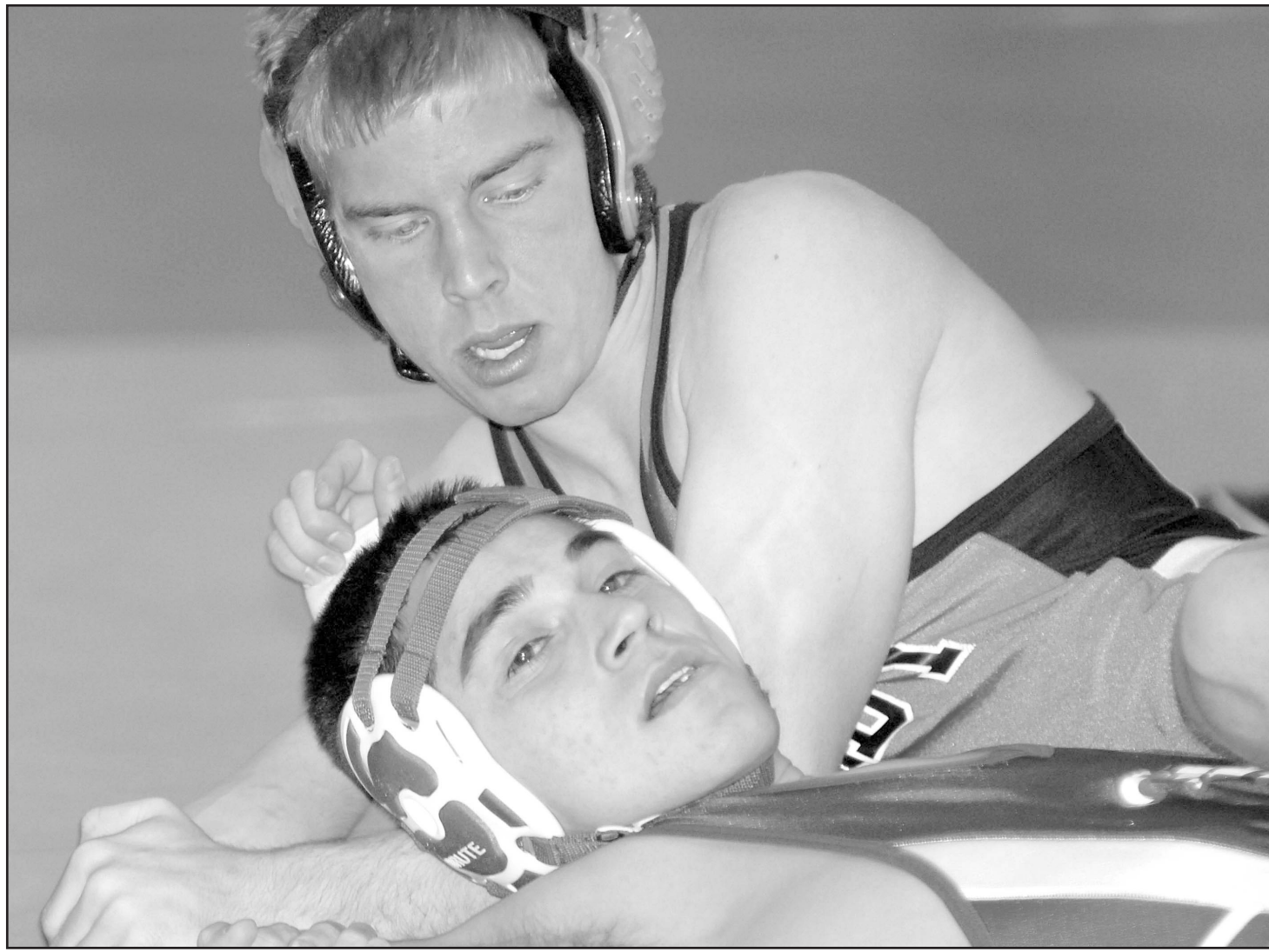


# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

## Making a 'statement'



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Eagle senior Brent Luedke, back, went for a pin on Hugoton's Rafael Ortiz during their regional tournament semifinal match Friday in Hugoton. Luedke beat Ortiz by fall and went on to win the championship at 130 pounds. The Eagles captured the regional team title with 213 points. They also qualified 10 wrestlers for the state tournament this weekend in Salina. See page 8 for more details.

## Entrepreneurs can jump in pool of funds

By John Van Nostrand  
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Common when starting a small business, the person behind the idea only has two sources of income to get it started and three are needed.

The third source has arrived. Those in northwest Kansas with visions of opening a small business can utilize \$300,000 from NetWork Kansas, a statewide collaboration of resources for starting or expanding businesses. NetWork Kansas is more than the money too.

"We act as a conduit. We connect the entrepreneurs to the resource," said Erik Pederson, operations manager for NetWork Kansas.

Pederson, and NetWork Kansas Director Steve Radley, were in Colby Thursday to announce the program and funds to a select group of people with a connection to the business environment of Thomas County.

StartUp Kansas began in August 2006 to provide funds to small businesses in rural Kansas through matching grants or unsecured loans that match the terms of the businesses throughout rural areas of Kansas. The \$300,000 is part of the E-Community Program, a branch of StartUp Kansas. The \$300,000 is dispersed through either loans or grants.

E-Community Program provides financial assistance through donations from individuals or businesses within the community. Through tax credits, loans and grants are available to e-communities. An e-community may be one town or a partnership of towns with total population less than 50,000.

"The economic goal is to supplement private capital," Radley said.

For example, Radley said an employee of the Washington newspaper was interested in purchasing the paper. He had finan-

cial support from a bank and asked NetWork Kansas to help complete the deal.

"If we can truly make a difference in communities, we put money where the mouth is," Radley said. "We need to empower communities."

The "e" in E-Community is representative of three needs; economics, education and expertise.

People with an idea to start a business who contact NetWork Kansas, may be referred to NetWork Kansas' list of resource partners who can help with one of the three categories. NetWork Kansas partners offer seminars, workshops, business planning and more. Colby Community College is a resource partner.

Pederson said, a Kansas couple noticed a nearby bed-and-breakfast was for sale. The couple had stayed at the bed-and-breakfast a couple of times and enjoyed the experience. The couple was inspired to see what it takes to buy and operate the bed-and-breakfast.

Not knowing anything about how to run such a business, NetWork Kansas referred the couple to somebody on the partner list to help them get started.

"We are partnering with you to make a difference with entrepreneurs in your community," Radley said.

A committee will review each application for use of the funds. Applications have been denied for various reasons. The committee will see if the application enhances a town by meeting a specific need or provide a combination of economic and community benefits. Any business idea that requests NetWork Kansas funds must have public funding. Public funds include the loan program through organizations like Thomas County Economic Development.

There are no restrictions on what kind of businesses when applying for E-Community loans.

For more information call 1-877-521-8600.

## Bill makes medical expenses tax deductible

TOPEKA (AP) — Medical expenses not covered by insurance would be tax deductible for Kansas residents under a House bill.

The proposal, heard Friday by the House Taxation Committee, also would allow those without employer-based health coverage to deduct money spent on an insurance plan.

Under the current system, money for a health insurance plan through an employer is taken out of a paycheck before taxes. But Ken Daniel, owner of Midway Wholesale in Topeka, said people who don't have the option of buying into an employer's plan often

are at lower-paying jobs. They must use taxed income to buy their coverage.

"This is the most regressive thing we have in the tax code," Daniel told the committee.

The Kansas Department of Revenue estimated that deductions for medical expenses would cost the state \$80 million in tax revenue and that number could more than double if deductions for buying insurance in the private market are included.

According to Rachel Smit, a policy analyst with the Kansas Health Institute, Kansas residents who buy health coverage through

their employers save an average of \$2,900 in taxes each year.

The federal government already allows taxpayers to deduct the cost of medical care if it exceeds 7.5 percent of their gross adjusted income — or more than \$2,250 for someone earning \$30,000 a year.

Corrie Edwards, executive director of the Kansas Health Consumer Coalition, said people with health insurance sometimes end up paying a lot for medical expenses.

"I don't know a lot about tax codes, but when this bill came across it looked like a small proactive step toward giving the av-

erage Kansan a break," Edwards said.

Derrick Sontag, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business, wrote in his testimony that the measure would help small businesses that don't receive the same tax credits as bigger businesses for contributing to the health insurance or flexible spending accounts for their employees.

"This legislation would help level the playing field by removing the competitive disadvantage small businesses face when not offering health benefits," Sontag wrote.

## Eagles medal at state piano

By Kevin Johnson

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Two Colby High School students received top ratings Saturday at the Kansas State Piano Festival in Wichita.

Lucas Baumfalk and Amanda Barnum each received a 1, the highest rating. They were two of four Colby students who played.

Freshman Amanda Barnum, performed Claude Debussy's "Le Petit Negre";

Sophomore Lucas Baumfalk, performed Jacques Ibert's "The Little White Donkey";

Sophomore Barbara Bickner, performed Jacques Ibert's "Le Petit Ane Blanc";

Senior Kevin Lang, who performed Claude Debussy's "Reflets Dans Leau".

All of CHS participants scored

highly amidst some tough judging and competition.

Participants at Saturday's piano festival were rated from 1-5, a rating of 1 showing high levels of musicality with few, to no, mistakes.

A rating of 3 is considered an average performance showing accomplishment and marked performance. A rating of five needs much improvement and is lacking musicality.

Barnum and Baumfalk both received a rating of 1, while Bickner and Lang both received a rating of 2.

Barnum and Baumfalk both received state medals for their performances.

"It went very well," Colby High School music teacher Joey Nichols said. "From what I hear from the students, they felt very well prepared and did very well in their

performances."

Nichols added that this was a banner year for Colby High School at the state Piano Festival because of the number of students who qualified to perform at the event, and the number of students scoring an exemplary mark.

"In the past we have only had one student who would receive a one at the state level and this year we had two students receiving scores of one," Nichols said.

Colby High School Music Booster President Jan Barnum said she was very proud of the CHS student's performances, considering the high level of competition and the intensity of the judging.

"The judging of the pieces the kids played was very tough," Barnum said. "All of the kids played very well. It was tough judging and they did very well."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Colby High students who played in the state piano festival are, left from right, seated senior Kevin Lang, sophomores Lucas Baumfalk, Barbara Bickner and freshman Amanda Barnum.

## Briefly

### Navy Band to play

The United States Navy Band from Washington, D.C. will present a free concert at the Colby Community Building on 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26. Under the baton of Captain George N. Thompson, the band will present a variety of popular and classical favorites.

Several members of the Colby Community College Band will join the Navy Band to perform John Philip Sousa's "Washington Post March."

The concert is free, but tickets are required. Free general admission tickets are available by sending your request and a self-addressed, stamped envelope

to: Pat Ziegelmeier, Colby Community College, 1255 South Range Ave., Colby, KS 67701

This special performance is part of the Navy Band's national tour.

The band performs frequently at the White House and the U.S. Capitol Building and has participated in 19 Presidential Inaugurals.

### Legislators on tour

Kansas State Senator Ralph Ostmeier and Rep. Jim Morrison will be visiting communities on Saturday to meet with constituents.

7-8 a.m., at Hank's in Goodland; 9:45-10:45 a.m., at Quality Inn in Colby; 11:30-1 p.m. at Trish's

Steakhouse and Lounge in Hoxie; 1:30-2:30 p.m. at Schweitzer Hotel in Hill City and 3:15-4:15 p.m. at the senior center in Plainville.

### Heartland student wins

On Feb. 11, 17 students competed for the winning title in the Thomas County Spelling Bee. Represented were students from Sacred Heart Catholic School, Brewster School, Golden Plains Middle School, Heartland Christian School, Colby Middle School, and two homeschool students. The winning student was Amy Myers from Heartland Christian School. Leea Juemern, a Golden Plains Middle School sixth-grade student, placed second, which makes her

an alternate if the winning student is unable to attend at the next level. Leea was tripped up by the word "ghostwrite." The county winner proceeds to a Regional Spelling Bee at Barton Community College in Great Bend.

### School board to meet

The Colby Public School Board will meet 7 p.m. tonight at the Administration building.

Agenda items include a curriculum presentation about Thomas County Academy; Thomas County Foundation; bullying program; and approval to let roof bids.