



COLBY FREE PRESS

12 pages

Golf course on par . . . so far

By John Van Nostrand

Free Press Publisher

jvannoststrand@nwks.com



FILE PHOTO

After a tumultuous winter, Colby's Meadow Lake Golf Course is ready for people to start playing golf. The clubhouse opened Tuesday. But for how long the course will be under current ownership is uncertain.

"We fell on hard times," said John Sears, president of the shareholder group overseeing the course's business. "The restaurant was not holding up its end of the deal. The golf course was fine. We held steady on membership, so no complaints there," he said.

In early 2007, the course took on more of a public business feel, rather than a traditional, private, country club plan. But there were still evident problems a year later. The restaurant closed in January.

"We put figures together. For whatever reason, were we too far out of the mainstream? People don't want to sit down with tablecloths, napkins and linen? Whatever it was, the overhead ate us up," Sears said.

In December, Sears said he and the 17 other shareholders met and decided on a new course of action.

"Our outcome was to sell our share of what we own," he said.

Sears said the restaurant was the biggest financial hurdle. Last year, there were about 120 members to the course. This year, there are currently about 72.

"With all the confusion and indecision, we are well over half of original memberships. We have a great base," he said. "We never thought of a bankruptcy."

The shareholder group owns about 13.5 of the approximate 67 acres the course sits on. Included in the shareholder group is the cart shed, clubhouse and very small portion of the actual course. The

A golfer watched her ball while playing at Meadow Lake Golf Course. The course is open for business this year, but the course is also for sale.

city of Colby owns the remaining property.

The shareholder group has a long-term lease for the land from the city.

"We listed the property for sale," Sears said. "In the meantime, we

wanted at least a golf course for all of us, especially those close to the course."

Sears said having a golf course in Colby is vital.

"It's important for the city. When people come to Colby, they need

schools, medical facilities, good roads, good trash pick up and they also need good recreation. Colby doesn't offer much, if it's not the golf course."

Sears said the course is appreciated by more than just those with an interest in golf as a hobby. The course will be used by Colby High's and Colby college's golf teams. Various groups and organizations have benefit golf tournaments. Sears said those events have been scheduled.

"We are still scheduling. Most of them who have used it in the past have contacted us.

"The high school will still play. We are meeting those demands," Sears said.

Colby Rotary is planning its third annual golf fundraiser this year. Rotary President Mike Fell said the golf course is important to the town and the people.

"It's tremendous. With a golf course, there is platform to raise money for community projects and activities. The golf course is a great environment to establish and build new friendships," Fell said.

Fell said the past two Rotary golf events have been very successful.

"The golf course represents a lot of the same theme as Rotary with fellowship and to come together for a good reason," he said.

Even though the golf course won't have its own restaurant to feed people while playing golf or raising money for a group, Sears said catered food will be an option.

"The only change is no full-service restaurant. We will get food if needed," he said.

Should the shareholders accept an offer from a potential, what happens next is unknown.

"If someone does buy it, I think we would disband the shareholder group. Shareholders have put in money.

Bills are paid," Sears said.

Local group needs help

Jan Katz Ackerman

Free Press Reporter

jkackerman@gmail.com

Volunteers are being sought in Thomas County to fill two slots on the Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development Council.

Sandy Rodgers, council president from Goodland and Duane Cheney, council coordinator in Colby, met this week with Thomas County Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers asking for help in filling the two seats.

The Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development Council is made up of eight northwest Kansas counties working cooperatively to achieve economic viability, enhanced quality of life and regional growth, according to the council mission statement, she said.

"We've helped sponsor agritourism and our goal is to bring the counties together because we can do more as a group," Rodgers said.

Colby resident Tracey Perkins was the last person appointed to the council as a representative for the Thomas County Commission, Rodgers said, and Perkins has not attended a meeting in "some time," asking the commissioners to replace her. She was appointed in 2002.

The RC&D meets at 6:30 p.m., the second Thursday of the month, at the U.S. Department of Agriculture office building, 915 E. Walnut.

"We benefit from each other

on what's happening in each other's area," Rodgers said of council members from Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan, Wallace and Gove counties.

Currently, commission representatives from Thomas, Sheridan and Gove Counties are being sought.

"We'll take the appointment under advisement and solicit someone to serve," Steele said.

Cheney said council members serve one-year terms, but there is no limit on the number of terms a person can serve.

Anyone wanting to volunteer can call Cheney at (785) 462-7671 ext. 5 or the clerk's office at 460-4500. The current council includes Myra Hyde and Ernie Ketzner of Cheyenne County; Jack Benton and Diana Solko of Decatur County; Marlene Erickson and Chris Sramek of Rawlins County; Danielle Freeman of Thomas County; Dean Schemm and Bruce Beck of Wallace County; Dana Charles of Logan County; and Sandra Rodgers and Greg Nemecheck of Sherman County.

Besides being heavily involved in Thomas County's recycling project and the Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling Hub located on College Drive near County Club Road, one of the council's latest ventures has been in Brewster.

In 2007, the council helped the Brewster Community Development Corporation re-establish a grocery store downtown for the community after the privately owned one closed.

Auction at Thomas County Fair to help cancer victims

By Joey Falkoff

Free Press Reporter

jfalkoff@nwks.com

“All the money raised will stay in the local area.”

Clair Schrock, rodeo committee chair

A lot of money is spent each year at the Thomas County Fair. In 2008, the fairboard has decided they would like to give some of it back to help fight a noble cause.

At the fairboard meeting Thursday, rodeo committee chairman Claire Schrock announced plans to hold a Partners for Cancer Victims auction the first night of this year's fair.

Partners for Cancer Victims is a local charitable organization operated by Colby resident Richard Homm.

"If you need money for cancer treatment, they will help you out," said Schrock.

The fairboard is hoping to return the favor by allowing the organization to auction off 50 cowboy chaps.

All of the proceeds from the event will go help Partners for Cancer Victims in western Kansas, eastern Colorado and parts of Nebraska.

"All of the money raised will stay in the local area," said Schrock.

"I would hope we could raise \$5,000, but I don't know. Richard told me a story about one pair he sold that brought in around \$10,000."

To help sell the chaps, the board plans on having 2008 Miss Rodeo America Amy Wilson model them and sign autographs during the auction.

"I know there's been a lot of speculation about whether Amy will be here or not, but she will be here the first night of the fair for sure," said board member Mark Anderson.

Homm has a special pair of chaps designed for Wilson to wear, which will also be auctioned off at

the National Rodeo Finals in Las Vegas in December.

Partners for Cancer Victims was started by Homm a little over a year ago just after he lost his wife to cancer.

"Knowing the expenses involved, he wanted to think of a way to give back to the community that helped him," said Schrock.

Homm has held similar auctions at rodeos in Garden City and Burlington, Colo.

He had talked with the fairboard about holding the auction here last year, but Schrock said they didn't have time to do it.

This year, it looks like Thomas County fairgoers will get the opportunity to add to their cowboy gear and help out cancer victims at the same time.



FILE PHOTO

Miss Rodeo America 2008 Amy Wilson will be asked to help out with the Partners for Cancer Victims Auction tentatively scheduled to take place the first night of this year's Thomas County Fair. Cowboy chaps will be auctioned off, and the fairboard plans on getting Wilson to model and autograph them for fans.

Briefly

Easter Egg hunt Saturday

The Colby Kiwanis Club is sponsoring its annual Easter Egg Hunt, starting at 10 a.m., Saturday, in Fike Park. The event will kick off at 10 a.m. with children ages three and younger looking for egg; at 10:10 a.m., children ages 4-6 will hunt and at 10:20 a.m., ages 7-9 will participate. The event is open to all children, 0 to 9 years.

Brewster dinner set

Brewster United Methodist Church will have a biscuits-and-gravy dinner from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Monday. Free-will offerings will be accepted.

Ribbon cuttings planned

Two ribbon cutting ceremonies will take place at 1005 S. Range Ave., Colby, Thursday, March 27, 2008. Ribbons will be cut at Doc's On Call and VisionSource of Colby at 5 p.m. Following the ribbon cuttings there will be an open house until 7 p.m.

"Please join Doc's On Call for hamburgers and drinks and then head on over to VisionSource of Colby for cookies and punch and help us welcome these businesses to their new location," said Holly Stephens, Chamber executive director. Call (785) 460-3401 for questions.

Farm Day Saturday

Colby FFA is hosting Farm Safety Day, beginning at 8 a.m., Saturday, on the Thomas County fairgrounds. The day is open to everyone and activities include a petting zoo, barrel rides, and more. For questions, call Shawna Howell, Colby High School ag instructor and FFA advisor, 460-5320.

Spring tea planned

Heartland Christian School will host its annual spring tea 2 p.m., Saturday, April 5 at Heartland Christian School. The speaker is Amy Wilson of Thomas County and who is Miss Rodeo America 2008. Musical guest will be Eternity Focus. Tickets

are available at Heartland Christian School, 1995 W. Fourth St., Colby, or call 460-6419.

Basketball tourney set

The Colby Lady Eagles are hosting "Battle of the Back Courts" 3-on-3 basketball tournament, Saturday, April 5. A boys and girls division for ages third through eighth grade is available. For information or an entry form, call 462-5300.

Childhood screenings set

The Colby School District and Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center staff are having pre-kindergarten screenings, Tuesday and Wednesday, April 8-9, at the United Methodist Church in Colby. The screenings take about one hour. Appointments can be made by calling Strange at 460-5111. However, Strange will be out of the office March 17-21 during spring break.

Free well testing

The Northwest Local Environmental Protection

Group in Colby is reminding anyone with a private well to have them tested, especially with the recent moisture. Snow and ice, officials said, may have allowed contaminants to leach into a well. The protection group provides free water well testing for nitrates and bacteria. For questions or to make an appointment, call (785) 462-8636 or stop by the office, 350 S. Range Ave., Suite 4, Colby. Residents can also call the Thomas County Health Department, 460-4596 to set up an appointment.

Gaither video Sunday

A Gaither Homecoming Video Concert is scheduled for 6 p.m., Sunday, at the Berean Church, 1000 S. Franklin Ave., Colby. The concert is free, open to everyone.

Teams sought for event

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County is searching for people wanting to form teams for this year's Bowl For Kids Sake 2008. The event is Sunday, April 13. For questions, call 460-9125.