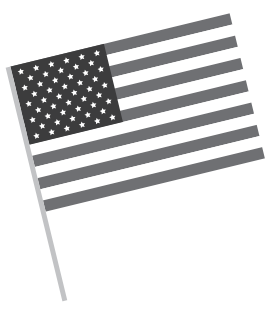


Remember our Veterans

10 a.m. — Monday — Beulah Cemetery, Colby

Speaker is Jim Griffin, VFW



12 pages

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Colby school OKs staff pay raises

By Joey Falkoff

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The Colby School District isn't just competing with other schools around state.

They're now having to keep up with local businesses.

Taking into consideration the new businesses opening in town this summer, the Colby school board approved a motion made by member Kevan Taylor to give salaried personnel a three percent raise and classified staff a 50 cent pay increase.

Starting wages were also bumped up \$1.00 for custodian/maintenance staff, 50 cents for food service staff, 65 cents for paraprofessionals and 58 cents for bus drivers.

The new starting wage for custodians is \$9.50 an hour, food service will start at \$7.85, paraprofessionals will start at \$8 and bus drivers will begin at \$9.25. Anyone who makes below those wages will automatically be bumped up.

"There are a lot of new businesses coming in and there will be a lot of places fighting over the same workers," said board president Tracy Rogers on motivation behind the pay increases.

The motion carried with a 5-2 vote. Gerry Fulwider and Omar Weber were the two dissenters.

Both were in favor of giving classified staff a 75 cent pay increase, which is what business manager Jo DeYoung proposed originally. The board has given just a 25 cent raise to classified staff the last couple of years.

"I didn't think 75 cents was out

of line," said Fulwider. "I just felt it was time to help that segment a little for their good and it's good for the school to retain them. I don't think it would allow us to recruit any more workers, but it might help keep the one's we have."

Taylor, who argued against DeYoung's original proposal, felt the district was better served by saving the money on salaries and using it for other purposes. By approving the 50 cent pay increase and a three percent overall salary increase, the district will save close to \$30,000.

"We're just trying to be conscientious about our money situation," said Taylor. "We don't have unlimited funds in Colby. I appreciate all the things those people do, but we just can't spend and spend and spend."

Teacher salaries are still under negotiations on an individual basis and Taylor also mentioned keeping consistency as a reason for limiting the pay increase of classified staff.

"I'm on the negotiation team with the teachers too, and we are trying to keep percentages constant throughout the district," said Taylor.

"I don't want bad blood between the staff and the teachers. If we give staff a 3.5 percent raise, the teachers will want 4.5 percent."

Instead of being concerned with saving money or maintaining leverage, Fulwider says the district should focus on providing a decent living for its employees. He pointed to Brewster moving to four-days-a-week as an example of operating on a false pre-tense.

"There's a real demand for our workforce particularly in lower-paying jobs," said Fulwider. "Brewster said in your paper they will save \$2,000, but what about the worker? That's a 20 percent drop in pay. With rising gas prices and the cost of medicare, they're needing 40 hours a week in to get by. My fear is we're going to be losing those workers to Wendy's, if they can make \$9 or \$10 an hour and get 40 hours."

According to DeYoung, the district's recent track record of retention has been outstanding.

"I think the turnover has been remarkably low," she said.

"We haven't had any turnover in food service."

"The only para that's leaving this year is a college student. Wage increases are a plus and health insurance makes it an attractive job."

With the new businesses coming to town and a recent increase in the federal minimum wage by 70 cents, DeYoung felt the 75 cent increase was needed to ensure that same type of stability in the future.

"The federal minimum wage going up gives us a cause do this," said DeYoung. "By giving them a 75 cent increase, we're enticing them to keep their job."

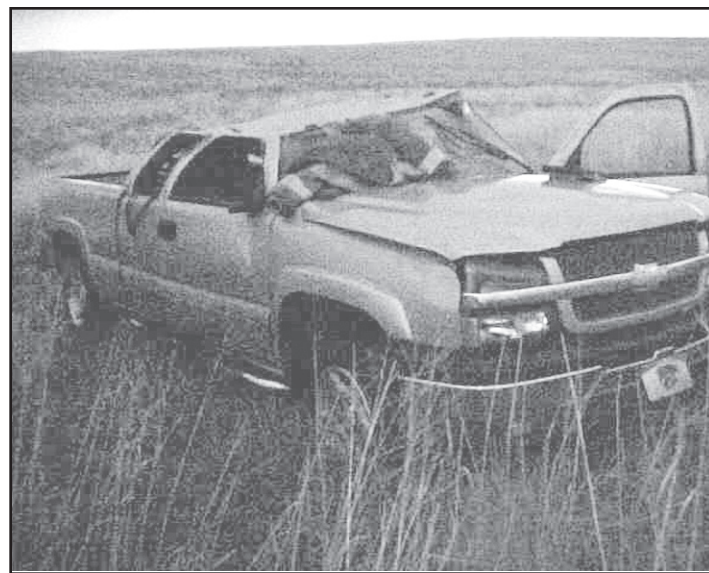
Instead, classified staff will have to settle for a 50 cent raise this upcoming year. What the effects are is anyone's guess at this point.

"I hope this will help put us in line with a private sector," said Fulwider.

Administrative salaries will be voted on during the June 2 board meeting.



SCOTT BARNUM/Contributed photos



ABOVE: Storm chasers were in action Thursday afternoon tracking the severe thunderstorms on Interstate 70 between Quinter and Wakeeney. At one point, the interstate was closed for west-bound traffic at Grainfield due to debris on the road. LEFT: A rolled-over pickup in a field eight miles north of Hill City was apparently on the road when a small tornado blew the vehicle off Thursday afternoon. Another motorist saw the pickup driver was trapped inside and called 911 for help.

Eagles forensic team has success on tip of their tongues

By Jan Katz Ackerman

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Forensic students at Colby High School had a first at firsts at the state competition which took place recently.

"I think what these students have accomplished this year is phenomenal," said Nancy Rundel, co-head coach. "Colby High School has never qualified a full squad for the state tournament and we've had the best team season ever."

The State Speech and Drama Festival took place last weekend at Kansas City Community College, Kansas City; and the Class 4A State Speech and Drama Championship tournament took place at Washburn Rural High School in Topeka. Four hundred forty-one

students, supported by 52 Kansas schools, attended the state competitions.

Rundel, along with co-head coach Amber Fairbrother, and assistant coach, Camille Giersch, has led 24 students through the drills of preparing for competitions.

"Students practice, practice, practice and compete in eight tournaments during the regular season to try to qualify for a state event," Rundel said. "On average, a student will perform his or her piece in practice and competition over 120 times."

The hard work paid off for Gray Henry, Katelyn Houtz and Courtney Röss.

While the Colby High School team finished in seventh place, Henry placed first in oral interpretation of poetry, followed by Röss who placed second. Houtz brought

home a sixth place title for her serious acting solo.

Henry said practice and listening to coaches is what got him to the state level.

"If I hadn't taken the advice of my coaches, I don't think I would have gotten as far as I did," he said.

Henry said he could not think of any single circumstance that sparked his interest in competing in forensics.

"I have always liked English and language arts," he said. "I suppose it's just a natural-born interest in forensics."

Juggling practice and school responsibilities have not been a problem for Henry. He also participates in Scholar's Bowl, the fall school play, and men's tennis.

"Forensics is the most flexible activity I've ever participate in,"

Henry said. "You could fit it into almost any schedule."

Henry said he plans to attend college after high school, and believes forensics has given him life-long skills.

"Unless you decide on a career in the field of hermitage, you are going to be around people," he said. "Being comfortable speaking in front of them can only help you."

Houtz agreed.

"I've always loved reading, English, and acting, so when my mom told me about forensics my freshman year, I knew that I wanted to go out for it," Houtz said.

Houtz, like Henry and their coaches, said practice was the key to making it to the state level.

"To prepare for competition in the Northwest Kansas League and to prepare for State compe-

tion, I have practiced my solo as much as possible," she said. "One thing that helps me become competition ready is performing in front of a large audience filled with people that I know well, so that I am not nervous in front of judges. To prepare for extemporaneous speaking, I have spent most of my time researching current events and giving speeches on possible topics."

Houtz said being in the program has altered her schedule in a few ways.

"The most obvious is having to get up early on Saturday mornings to compete in tournaments," she said. "But the tournaments are always fun, so I've learned to sleep on the way to the tournaments instead."

Houtz plans to use her speaking skills after high school at college.

"At this point," she said. "I am considering a double major in political science and foreign language. I haven't decided where I want to go to college yet, but I am guessing that I'll probably go to the University of Kansas or maybe a college on the East Coast."

Röss plans to attend Kansas State University and plans to use her forensics training in college.

"The KSU forensics team is currently ranked fourth in the nation, so I hope my strong skills from CHS forensics will help me become a successful member of the K-State team as well," Röss said.

Röss said forensics has been a "truly wonderful experience" and has given her public speaking skills, new friends and the "time of (her) life."

See "FORENSICS," Page 3

Briefly

Marker dedication Sunday

Alumni of the former Brownville School will dedicate a marker at 2.30 p.m. (CDT) on Sunday at Brownville, 12 miles south of Brewster on Kansas 184 or 11 miles north of Winona. Mike Baughn, Thomas County sheriff and mayor of Brewster, will speak. The limestone marker, set on the steps of the brick school building, will have a granite inset with a picture of the first and last buildings on it, said Nandine Kammer of Brewster. Everyone is welcome to attend the event.

College meets Wednesday

A special meeting of the Colby Community College Board of Trustees will be held at noon, Wednes-

day, in the Thomas Hall board room at the college to discuss a policy change.

Commissioners to meet

The Thomas County Commissioners will hold a special meeting beginning at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, in the commissioners room, 300 N. Court Ave., Colby. The meeting agenda includes discussion with Custom Energy Services; investment grade audit until 11:30 a.m. The commissioners will then meet to do a walk through of all county facilities with custodians and the service group.

Church plans camp

Colby Wesleyan Church is announcing a free, summer day camp for children ages 4 to 12 called

Tuesdays at 10. From 10 a.m. to noon every Tuesday from June 3-July 20, children are invited to participate in fun, games, food, clowns and crafts. Children will meet at the Colby Wesleyan Church, 320 W. Pine. Lunch will be served. Call, 462-8391.

EMS week continues

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services staff are continuing their week-long celebration recognizing EMS week by inviting everyone to stop by the Colby Community Building from 5 to 9 p.m., Saturday.

Teams forming for event

Teams are now forming for the July 25-26 annual Relay for Life in Thomas County, said Diane Stithem,

publicity chair. This event will again be held at Fike Park in Colby and all proceeds will go toward cancer research, finding a cure and fighting the disease. Call 462-2383 or 443-2119 t register.

Class of '98 plans reunion

Members of the Colby High School Class of 1998 are planning a 10-year reunion. The plans are to meet at 8 p.m., Friday, July 25 at City Limits fireside lounge for a social, then at noon, Saturday, July 26 at Fike Park for a brown bag lunch with families, pets etc., said Jada Tubbs, one of the organizers. Also on Saturday, at 6:30 p.m., the class will be dining together in Montana Mike's conference room, finishing at 8 p.m. and returning to City Limits fireside lounge for another social.