



COLBY FREE PRESS

50¢

Thursday

July 17, 2008

Volume 119, Number 113
Serving Thomas County since 1888

8 pages



JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

Relaxing to the tunes

TOP: Millie Lauritsen, left, and Wayne Lauritsen of the Sappa Strings performed during Picnic in the Park Wednesday at Fike Park. Next week's featured entertainer is Dan Keller. Two Picnic in the Park's remain this summer. They begin every Wednesday at noon. **RIGHT:** Massage Therapy by Karen employee Cara Drag was giving back, shoulder and neck rubs to parkgoers Wednesday.



New law could impact schools

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Free Press Reporter
jkackerman@gmail.com

One of 194 new laws which went into effect July 1 in Kansas will impact Colby schools.

Superintendent Terrel Harrison said even with an increase of \$59 per student in state student aid, the district will still have challenges figuring future budgets.

"The projected dollar figure for state aid will slightly increase each year and is paid on a weighted full time equivalency, not an actual full time equivalency," Harrison said.

Under the old law, school districts received \$4,374 per student in tax dollars. The state aid per students jumps to \$4,433 in 2008-2009, and to \$4,492 in the 2009-2010 and each school year thereafter. That is an increase of \$59 per year.

Weighted averaging, or weighted full time equivalency, refers to a numeric figure attached to services such as bilingual, at-risk, transportation, or special education that a district uses to work with the state funding formula. The general fund of each district is determined by the weighted full time enrollment times the base state aid per pupil to equal general fund dollars.

Harrison said because the state sets a 20 mill cap on tax dollar money, 85 percent of all Colby school's general fund dollars will come in the form of state aid.

"Without a capital outlay levy to replenish our capital outlay fund," Harrison said, "our district has been forced to pay for the maintenance of property and purchasing equipment, including buses, out of general and supplemental funds since 1998."

During the school year just ended, there were 996 students in Colby schools. That number equated to a full time equivalency of 950.7 students.

"The state allows districts with declining enrollment to use a previous year, current year, or a three-year average to determine FTE," Harrison said. "This formula lessens the impact of a district's declining enrollment."

Harrison said the projected head count for the upcoming year is 956 students. For the 2009-2010

school year that number is expected to decrease by three percent.

"If our enrollment starts to increase, we will project higher numbers in the future," Harrison said. "Our last enrollment increase was in 2004-2005 of two percent."

Colby schools operated on \$12.9 million of the \$13.3 million budgeted. The total state aid to the general fund based on the 2007-2008 enrollment of 1,602 students was \$5,999,491. That figure included \$899,292 for special education and \$5.1 million dollars for the general fund. The district's budget also relies heavily on how the county's valuation sits. Current Thomas County valuation is \$80,588,565, and it is estimated next year to be \$81,367,697, according to Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms. Of the county's valuation, Colby Public School's valuation is \$56,924,618. For next school year, the district's valuation is estimated at \$58,198,389. The school levied \$2.6 million dollars last school year and expects to levy the same this upcoming school year.

"A lower projected enrollment, combined with higher fuel, energy, food and transportation costs translates into less money for student instruction," Harrison said.

Declining student numbers and higher costs will force school officials to make difficult decisions.

"We will be required to operate wisely and save money wherever possible, while still keeping our focus on students," Harrison said. "Colby Public Schools is dedicated to making sure every child receives a quality education in our district."

Colby's school district employs 250 people annually. "The payroll for these employees goes back into the community to help the local economy, which is important to our district," Harrison said. Keeping teacher quality high is also a district priority.

As for the other laws, they run the gamut from changes to healthcare, penalties for various criminal activity, limitations on motorboat exhaust noise, new license plates and firearm rules and regulations.

For a list of the new laws, visit the state's website at: www.ksrevisor.org/rpts/rs1801.html

Woman's dog kennel considered offensive to neighbors

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Free Press Reporter
jkackerman@gmail.com

A Colby woman's dog kennel is being targeted as a foul place to live near by her neighbors.

"I don't know what the complaint is, so it's hard to comment," Sharon Dunn said Tuesday afternoon.

Dunn said her dog kennel, consisting of more than 20 dogs, complies with rules set out by the Kansas Department of Environment.

"I'm in compliance with the KDHE," Dunn said. "In fact, on July 10 I received my breeding license."

Dunn said a state kennel inspector toured her facility last week and granted her a license to raise large and small dogs. She said the inspector told her the state had received a complaint about the kennel which is located at 1705 N. Range Ave., but nothing more was said to her about it.

Don Woofter, Shawn Curry, Jason Woofter and Dave Harper met with Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers on Monday to talk about noise and smells coming from the kennel area.

"We hate having to be here," Curry said. "But if she's going to run a business, she needs to buy ground and do it outside the 3-miles limit."

The four men asked the commissioners to uphold codes set out by the city of Colby and Thomas County linking a three-mile area around Colby. The codes apply to the area they live, Murray Subdivision, that says a "home occupation permit" must be approved by 75 percent of the residents before a business, in this case the kennel,

can open. Those same codes apply to building permits and other aspects of a neighborhood; however, patrol of the area falls under the jurisdiction of the county sheriff.

"As homeowners and neighbors, we submit that this did not happen and that we will not approve such a request for this business," they said in a statement signed by the four men and 12 others that was given to the commissioners.

Don Woofter, Jason Woofter and Curry said they have tried talking with Dunn about barking

and the smell of animal feces with no success.

"I'm a light sleep and want windows open at night, and I can't do it," Don Woofter said about barking dogs.

"We need help from the county," Jason Woofter said.

Steele said any covenants that apply to the neighborhood would involve a "civil action," but on the public side of the matter the three-mile limit is something the county could look at.

Curry said Dunn's backyard fence butts right up to his and he fears a dog might jump the fence and injure a child. He said he built children's play equipment in his back yard, which now sits unused because of his concerns.

"Last year she said she would get rid of some of the dogs, but now there are more," Curry said.

"You know what happens if a pack of dogs get out," Jason Woofter said.

"If this happened in the city limits, I'm sure the enforcement officer would put a stop to it," Harper said.

Don Woofter said while all the neighbors selected their properties and are being taxed for them, the location does not afford the same services as being within the city limits. He said the sheriff's office has not done anything about the kennel and their complaints.

"It seems we ought to get something for being taxed," Woofter said.

Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn on Tuesday afternoon said he is aware of the matter.

"I have been out there, and we are working on that case," Baughn said. "We are aware of the problem, and I've been in contact with the county attorney."

Sowers believes the county needs to contact the state and determine whether Dunn is in compliance with kennel laws.

Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms said County Attorney Andrea Wyrick would need to draft a letter to go to Dunn from the county level.

"We are going to abase a nuisance," Steele said.

"Don't get us wrong," Don Woofter said. "I hate having to do this, but we are captive to our homes."

"I don't know what the complaint is, so it's hard to comment."

Sharon Dunn,
dog owner

Briefly

Carnival volunteers sought

The Thomas County Amusement Association is needing help to operate game booths at the Thomas County Fair scheduled from Tuesday, July 29 through Saturday, Aug. 2. "We are looking for any groups, organizations or individuals who would be willing to volunteer a few hours," said Wanda Brown with the association. "Last year, we ran 28 games, rides, ticket and prize booths, requiring about 600 volunteers." Anyone interested would be asked to work two hour shifts — two per shift. Games run from 7 to 11 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. For questions

or to help, call Holly Stephens at the Colby/Thomas County Chamber office, 460-3401.

Sunday discounts planned

In order to raise awareness of the positive message and great family atmosphere at the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Festival, scheduled for Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Thomas County Fairgrounds, the Colby Bluegrass Committee is doing a new gospel promotion for the churches this year, said Susan McLemore, committee member. "We annually hold a gospel sing-along at 9:30 a.m., Sunday,

and it has long been a favorite event for both festival attendees and bands," she said. Consequently, McLemore said that if a group of 10 people come to the ticket booth together on Sunday morning and identify themselves as members of a given church, they will be able to purchase a Sunday ticket and receive a \$5 discount. For questions, call 460-7643.

Potluck tonight

The Pickin' On the Plains Bluegrass festival will kick-off with a potluck dinner at 6:30 p.m., today, for those wanting to take part in a jam session. "Please

bring a covered dish and table service," organizers said, "drinks will be provided." Anyone who plays a stringed instrument is encouraged to bring it along. The Pickin' On the Plains event begins Friday.

Car wash set Friday

The Colby High School cheerleaders will be raising money for the "Relay for Life," an event which helps cancer victims, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday, at the Wal-Mart parking lot. This year's Relay for Life is scheduled Friday, July 26, at Fike Park. All proceeds from the car wash go toward the event.