



# COLBY FREE PRESS



JASMINE STEWART/Colby Free Press

Melissa Stramel (above), the driving force behind a new business in downtown Colby, placed items along the wall. Creations Gallery, which is actually 15 businesses in one, opens today at 478 N. Franklin Ave.

## Arts co-op opens on Franklin

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
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Downtown Colby is gaining a new business which is actually 15 businesses in one.

Melissa Stramel is the drive behind Creations Gallery, which opens today at 478 N. Franklin Ave., in the downstairs part of her husband's Stramel Law Office building.

Stramel, who has taken her floral designs and wreaths to craft shows, said the cost of driving and difficult weather prompted her to find a way to sell craft items closer to home. She said her husband Todd has a passion for economic development, and while their initial idea was to put offices in the space, the outcome has been a retail outlet for a plethora of artists and crafters.

"It's a cooperative," Stramel said. "Everybody works four hours every two weeks. My sister used to live in Portland (Ore.), and she told me about something similar to this and I thought it was cool."

Besides wreaths and floral home-decor items created by

**"It's a cooperative. Everybody works four hours every two weeks."**

Melissa Stramel,  
Creations Gallery

Stramel, products featured at the gallery include hand-made soaps by Anita Thiel of Levant; books and fire arts by Lori Wicks, and fine arts by Shane Scranton, both of Brewster; hand-blown glass beaded jewelry by Lu Neuen-schwander of Hoxie; and home-made candles by Ilene Beckman, who lives between Oakley and Grinnell.

Colby-made items include home decoration signs by Bobbie Barton, crocheted purses by Frances Griego, jewelry by Johnnie Barton, wall hangings and bed quilts by Kim Benson, decorative birdhouses by Tanya Christensen, pottery by Jeanne Cox, western jewelry by Mary Maxwell, baby blankets and beaded socks by Nancy Mikesell, embroidered signs by Cristal Robbins and

etched glassware by Brice and Amber Barton.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg of people who make things at home," Stramel, a pharmacist by training, said. "This is all 100 percent handmade and hand-crafted items."

There's room for expansion in both items and number of crafters, Stramel said. For details, call her at (785) 460-1823. She said the store has a classroom which can accommodate up to 12 students. Anyone who wants to use it to teach crafting can stop by the store or call.

Hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursdays; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; and 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday. A grand opening is planned from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday.

## Farmer complains on mowing policy

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A Thomas County farmer talked to county commissioners for almost an hour Friday about mowing rights of way along county roads, complaining that not all landowners were being treated alike when it comes to crops that wind up on county land.

Bill Miller told the commissioners he felt the road and bridge department was not mowing right of ways consistently throughout the county. He showed them more than 40 photos he had taken of road ditches and adjacent cropland. Miller said he particularly did not like the fact that crops had been graded off some of Delbert Touslee's land.

Commissioner Paul Steele, noting Touslee has not called to complain, said he did not think it was Miller's place to do it for him.

"Delbert won't come to you and ask," Miller said. "Either define all the rights of way or don't define any of them."

Touslee said today he is not sure where the right of way is for the ground Miller talked to the commissioners about. That field is on a curve of Old U.S. 24, he said.

"Last year, the county mowed about six or eight feet of the wheat I'd planted, and they didn't tell me," Touslee said. "I just accepted the fact maybe that's where the right of way was. The county claims mine was the worst (encroachment on county land) and they wanted to make a point. I think they did some other people's, but mine was more visible right there on the curve at Levant."

Touslee said when the mowing took place this past spring, he talked with County Appraiser Mary Cech and she referred him to Road and Bridge Department Supervisor Clair Schrock. He said she never did talk to Schrock about the matter.

"I just didn't want to cause a problem," he added.

Touslee said he was aware Miller planned to talk to the commissioners about his land.

"Bill told me he had some other beef about things and wanted to add this to it," Touslee said. "I told him he I didn't care what he'd say about it."

Schrock told commissioners the rights of way throughout the county vary from 60 to 100 feet.

"It just depends on what road it is," Schrock said. "For example, Mingo Road from I-70 east to

**"Either define all the rights of way or don't define any of them."**

Bill Miller,  
Colby farmer

(U.S.) 83, the rights of way are 100 feet. Why (the state) did that, I don't know. The rights of way differ for what the future plans were when the county or state laid out the road."

Schrock said the right of way on the road near Touslee's leading into Levant is 80 feet wide. He said he is trying to find out why it is that wide, compared to others that are 60 feet.

"The Levant plat shows 80 feet,"

Schrock said, "but I haven't found the plans to when (the road) was built and laid out. I haven't found anything in the courthouse showing anything other than 80 feet."

Schrock said when he directed the right of way on Touslee's land to be mowed to the full 80 feet, he told workers to mark the boundary with a dirt berm next to the crop ground. He said the berm is less than a foot high, and since it was built, there's been no planting on the right of way.

"Delbert has stayed back and accepted it," Schrock said, "but Bill hasn't accepted it. There's only a handful of farmers that want to farm in the right of way. The rest stay back and farm where they are supposed to."

"Bill went in a couple weeks ago and worked down the burn. The next morning, I went back and put the burn back in."

Steele said Schrock keeps the commissioners abreast of what projects his crews are working on.

"When we have a major project building project at Levant and have rented heavy equipment for three months, we don't have the manpower to mow," he said. "We've already had one accident in the project during fog, and Clair came to us and asked what to do, mow or finish the project. We told him to finish the Levant project and then mow."

Miller said he wanted the commissioners to tell him where the liability lies if someone has an accident from hitting dirt ridges along roads made by county equipment.

Bruce Flipse, county attorney elect, was at the meeting.

"Kansas is a negligence liability state," Flipse said. "If a jury trial

takes place, the jury will assign a percentage of liability to those involved, up to 100 percent liability."

"Kansas Counties Association Multi-line Pool, our insurance pool, said liability starts with the farmer, then the road and bridge department, then the county clerk, then the commissioners, and then the insurance company goes back after the farmer," said County Clerk Shelly Harms.

Miller pushed for the commissioners to make a decision about mowing and maintaining rights of way. Flipse advised the commissioners to let him check the law before taking action.

"You are talking about a major problem, and it needs study time," Flipse said.

"We need to study and get everybody on the same page, no matter what page we are on," Commissioner Ken Christiansen said.

On another matter, commissioners told Gayona and Jim McDonald they could not help them with a piece of property her mother, Doris Voisin, does not want. The couple said Voisin, 85, can no longer maintain the property next to her house in the 600 block of South Range Ave., nor pay the \$30 per year property taxes.

"Forty to 50 years ago, there was a house on the lot," Jim McDonald said. "Then urban renewal came to Colby, and the city tore the house down. Doris has been paying \$30 taxes on a lot and keeping it up."

McDonald said his mother-in-law would like to deed the property over to the county to sell at a sheriff's sale. Steele said he was not sure whether that could be done.

Sheriff Mike Baughn said he would have to check the law before taking on the task.

McDonald said the only person he knows who could benefit from the property is Gerald Plantz, a neighbor. He said his mother-in-law did not want to give the property to Plantz, however.

The commissioners told the McDonalds to talk to Plantz and see whether he was interested, then come back to them.

## Thieves make off with concrete fawns from two Colby lawns

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
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Somebody is kidnapping Bambi from Colby lawns.

It may be a joke, but the homeowners don't think it's so funny. One said the missing concrete spotted fawn had been a gift to his wife from a grandson.

Police Chief Randy Jones said a report

Friday marked the second time in two weeks a concrete lawn ornament had disappeared from a Colby yard.

The first theft was reported Aug. 26, when a spotted fawn was taken from Rex Buford's lawn in the 900 block of E. Eighth Street.

Jones said the second ornament went missing sometime between Aug. 26 and the day of the report from James Harper's yard in the 1100 block of East Ninth.

Stealing it was no small task. Janet Harper said the little deer weighs about 100 pounds.

"I went for a walk Tuesday morning and noticed the deer missing," she said. "Somebody had to walk through the rocks, but that wouldn't leave (foot) prints."

Harper said she put the deer in her yard about four weeks ago, and she and Buford had noted the similarity of their fawns

When she first noticed hers was gone,

she said, she wasn't going to say anything. After reading about Buford's being stolen, though, she decided to call the police.

Buford said there are no leads in the case of his missing fawn.

"They sure were brave, since it's right under a street light," he said. "I've had the big buck tipped over a couple times."

Buford said a grandson gave the fawn to his wife as a gift.

After fertilizing the yard last week, he said, she noticed the ornament missing.

"This all started about the time college started," Buford said. "I hope it stops."

There are no suspects in either case, the chief said.

Anyone who knows anything about the thefts or the whereabouts of the missing fawns should call the police department at (785) 460-4460, he said. The estimated value of each is \$150.

## Briefly

### Coaches' coffee returns

Back by popular demand, "Coffee with the Coaches," begins at 9 a.m. every Saturday during the Colby High football season, said Coach Chris Gardner, at the Sports Shoppe, 400 N. Franklin Ave. For questions, call 460-5000.

### Food sign-up set Monday

Prairie Land Food (formerly the Share program) will have its monthly food sign-up from Monday to Friday, Sept. 12, at the State Farm Insurance office, 905 E. Fourth St., Colby. The September menu includes turkey strips, shrimp rings in sauce, deli ham, chicken tenders, ground turkey, lasagna with meat sauce, six to eight

fruits and vegetables, all for \$23.50 plus two hours of volunteer service. For questions, call Gene Griffin, 460-3579.

### Red Cross offers classes

Thomas County Red Cross is offering a first-aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation class from 6 to 10 p.m. Tuesday. For costs, location and registration, call Sherry White, manager, (785) 462-7161.

### Fair board meets Sept. 11

The Thomas County Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. next Thursday, Sept. 11, in the 4-H Building at the fairgrounds. Agenda items include committee reports from building and grounds, rodeo, parade and entertainment, fair book, advertising and exhibits and premium checks. Guests expected include Holly

Stephens, Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce executive director, and J&R Marketing co-owner Rich Epp. The board plans to discuss a grant from Midwest Energy.

### Bluegrass concert Sept. 18

Tickets are available for a concert featuring the Isaacs and Chace McNinch, bluegrass singers, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 18, in the Colby High School auditorium. For questions or ticket locations, call (785) 443-1994.

### Book review Sept. 16

A book, "Last Rights" by Stephen P. Kiernan, will be reviewed at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 16, at the Hospice Services Office, 515 W. Fourth, Colby, by Barbara (Scheopner) Stoecklein. "Last Rights" offers a hopeful, profound vision for patients, doctors

and families: a way to honor the dying during their greatest vulnerability, a chance for families to recon-nect and opportunity for the medical system to treat patients with ultimate respect, a time to give comfort and compassion to those we most love," Stoecklein says. For questions, call 462-6710

### Treasurer to close Tuesday

The Thomas County treasurer's office will be closed Tuesday so employees can attend motor vehicle training, said Treasurer Donita Applebury. For questions, call 460-4520.

### Two dogs found

Colby Animal Clinic has two dogs waiting for their owners to retrieve them. One is a Jack Russell terrier and the other, a mixed breed, was found close to Levant. To identify, call 460-8621.

