



COLBY FREE PRESS



Flighty friends are hard to get

Catching butterflies can be hard work. Austin Bier, 8, (in front above) and his brother Brandon, 6, (holding butterfly) spent a little time after school Friday trying to catch monarch butterflies as they fluttered around a bush outside the rectory at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The monarchs, which spend their summers in the north and migrate to Texas and Mexico in the winter, were passing through Colby last week.

CYNTHIA HAYNES
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State buying water rights along creek

By Andy Heintz

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Some northwest Kansas farmers may be able to sell water rights to the state under a program designed to stretch out the area's water supply and ensure that Kansas sends enough water downstream to Nebraska.

Landowners who are willing to retire their water rights may be able to sell them to the state Conservation Commission at a fixed rate price of \$2,000 per acre foot under the Water Rights Retirement Program, known as WTAP or "Water-TAP."

"People will not want to give up their water rights without an incentive," Steve Frost, state water conservation manager.

The commission began accepting applications Oct. 1. The state is offering to buy rights in the Prairie Dog Creek basin, which stretches from Sherman County through Thomas and Decatur into Norton County.

The state also is targeting rights in six "high-priority" units in the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District.

"It's a pilot program designed to establish a water-based incentive program that will help balance supply with demand," Frost said.

The state hopes to help restore aquifers and stream flows in areas that have seen reduced stream flow and water supply in recent years. A third area the commission is concentrating on is the Rattle Snake Creek Basin, which runs from near Bucklin to Sterling.

The Prairie Dog Basin was chosen because its stream flow affects Kansas efforts to comply with the Republican River Compact with

Nebraska.

The commission has designated six areas of the High Plains Aquifer in Thomas, Cheyenne, Sherman, and Sheridan counties for the program, two in Thomas County.

Payment landowners receive is based on the historic amount of water a farm has consumed, the irrigation area's proximity to a stream and the price the landowner wants, Scott said.

"The state wants to buy water rights at the most affordable price," he added.

Scott said low bids are not the only element that the commission would consider when it decides who gets grants. For example, he said, a person who wants to retire a well that is near a stream would be given preference over a person who wants to sell a well that is located far away from a stream, even if that person will accept less money.

"We want to evaluate all the variables and decide what gives us the best bang for our buck," Scott said.

There is only so much money, he added, and some people who want to retire their rights will not be able to sell.

He said the people who retire their water rights would be able to practice dryland farming. Some might sell only part of their rights, not all, and continue some irrigation.

The project will last five years. The fall sign-up period will go through Nov. 15. If money is still available, the commission will have a spring sign-up period Feb. 15 through March 31.

For information, contact Frost at (785) 296-8964 or the Groundwater Management District in Colby at (785) 462-3915.

Reward!

\$500 in vandalism

The Colby Police Department is offering a \$500 reward to anyone who can lead officers to the vandals who shot out at least 30 car windows during the early morning hours of Wednesday, Oct. 8.

The criminals also broke a window at Farm and Ranch Realty on West Fourth Street, said Colby Chief of Police Randy Jones.

"We believe it took place some time after midnight," Jones said. "We're in the process of talking to potential witnesses."

Jones said the weapon was either a pellet or bb gun. Car windows were broken from Smith Drive on the west to east of 10th Street on the east.

"Most of the broken car windows occurred north of Fourth Street," the chief said.

Jones said he estimates the combined damage will total thousands of dollars. If you have information, call the Colby Police Department at (785) 460-4460. Callers may remain anonymous, the chief said.

Shape up at Boot Camp

If you're worried about facing a long winter of flab, the Colby Recreation Department can give you a hand working off the pounds at its sixth Boot Camp.

The morning fitness class meets from 5:45 to 6:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Community Building.

The first session started Jan. 7 and an average of 47 people have been attending, including a dozen who have been attending since the first one, said Recreation Director Stacy Lee, who teaches the classes.

"Back in January," she said. "I was so excited to have 30 people signed up for the first session. You can imagine how overwhelmed I was when 54 people showed up the first day."

Participant Nancy Arendt said she thinks highly of the fitness class.

"Stacy gives us a well-rounded program of fitness with encouragement," she said. "It targets the whole body with variations of workouts and equipment so that

it doesn't become exercise drudgery."

Judy Luedke, who originally signed up thinking the class was being offered in the early evening, said that she has been able to adjust to the schedule.

"It gives me the opportunity to schedule fitness first in the mornings, because something always seems to come up later in the day that won't allow me to exercise," she said.

Lee said the response had been good since the program's beginning.

"We've really received such positive feedback from the class," she said. "Although 5:45 a.m. is not appealing to most, the benefits of the class should be. We've had some inspirational testimonies."

The camp has attracted participants from high school age to those in their 60s, she said and from Brewster and Oakley and west as Colby.

The cost is \$30 for a six-week session. Call Lee at the recreation center at (785) 460-4440 to get signed up.

Chamber, museum offer October fun

Enjoy German cuisine and tap your toes to a lively tune at the Prairie Museum of Art and History's Oktoberfest from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday as part of the Chamber of Commerce "Business After 5" program.

"It is just a great way to get new people in ... so they can see all the museum has to offer," said Director Sue Taylor.

Oktoberfest, she said, originates with a yearly 16-day festival each year in Munich during late September and early October. It is the world's largest fair, with some 6 million people attending every year, and is an important part of Bavarian culture.

"We chose the Oktoberfest theme because the greatest number of immigrants to Kan-

sas and Thomas County in the late 1800s were Germans," Taylor said. "We are planning a German tour of the galleries, focusing on the German steins, Meissen, Steiff animals, dolls, Steuben and Hummels."

German foods will be served, including bierocks, beer, wine, sausage, cheese, bread, crackers, pretzels and cream puffs.

"Business After 5 is a come-and-go atmosphere, allowing for ... networking and a good time ...," said Holly Stephens, executive director of the Colby-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

For the museum's Oktoberfest, lederhosen and feathered alpine hats are optional attire, said Taylor. Everyone is invited.

Briefly

Rexford students get out early

Golden Plains schools in Rexford and Selden will dismiss at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday so that the teachers can get together for some training. On Monday, Oct. 27, school will be dismissed at 12:30 p.m. for fall parent-teacher conferences.

Ten days left to register

Anyone who did not vote in the last two state and national elections and anyone who has moved or changed their name needs to register in order to vote in November. Thomas County voters can register or re-register at the clerk's office at the courthouse from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday through next Monday, Oct. 20. Voters also may register while renewing a driver's license or go online to the Thomas

County website at thomascountyks.com, which has links to the Kansas secretary of state's office.

Scouts to collect for Genesis

The Colby Girl Scouts plan their annual "Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat" campaign from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday. Scouts and members of other organizations will go door to door collecting nonperishable food for the Genesis Food Bank. If you are going to be gone, leave the canned goods on your porch. If the weather is bad, the drive will be put off a week.

FFA selling fruit, smoked meat

The Colby FFA is conducting its annual Rivestart fund raiser, selling fruit and smoked meats through Monday, Nov. 10. Delivery will be Wednesday, Dec. 10. To order, contact an FFA member or

advisor Shawna Howell at (785) 460-5320 or showell@colbyeagles.org.

Kiwanis plans feed next week

The Colby Kiwanis Club will hold a pancake feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall at 220 N. Lake St. The cost of \$4 per person, with proceeds going to Christmas, youth and other community projects. Advance tickets are available from any Kiwanis member.

City looking for referees

The city Recreation Department is looking for referees to officiate Mens Basketball League games, with start on Saturday, Nov. 8, and run on Sunday afternoons from November through February. Call the department at (785) 460-4440 to sign up.

Department offers flu shots

The Thomas County Health Department will be offering flu shots at the health department office on Range from 1-4 p.m. next Monday and from 9 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 22; Tuesday, Nov. 4; and Monday, Nov. 10. The cost is \$25. No reservations are needed.

Learn how to burn grass safely

Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development plans a school on how to burn off Conservation Reserve grass from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at the 4-H Building in Colby. The workshop is open to the public but registration is requested by next Tuesday, Oct. 21, for a meal count. Lunch will be provided by the Thomas and Sheridan County conservation districts. For information, call the county Extension office at (785) 460-4582.

