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# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Orange brightens roadway

State highway workers have been out this week smoothing the shoulders of K-25 north of Colby with asphalt millings. Flaggers controlled one-way traffic through the work zone for safety. Mike Sheley, a senior equipment operator, was flagging at the south end. He said everyone was slowing down and being safe, though it could get a little confusing with traffic coming in off the side roads.

STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press



## Rainfall for year an inch over normal

Colby's precipitation total for December was .65 of an inch, measured at the Kansas State University Northwest Research and Extension Center, and that put us above the normal level of .48 of an inch for the month.

Precipitation for the year was 21.27 inches. Normal is 20.34 inches, based on the 30-year aver-

age from 1971 to 2000, said Christine Henderson, a technician at the National Weather Service office in Goodland. This average will be refigured next year, she added.

The month and year totals have not been published in the paper because the extension center was closed over the holidays.

Henderson said other towns in

the area also had a wetter year than normal. Goodland measured 19.66 inches, up .66 from normal. Burlington, Colo., had 21.65 inches, up 5.21 inches from normal.

McCook, Neb., was 1.45 inches above normal with 23.07 inches. The real wet spot of the area, however, was Hill City, whose 32.06 inches of rainfall was a whopping

10.01 inches above normal for the year. Mark Buller, a forecaster at the Weather Service, attributed this to the weather pattern in spring and early summer.

Data collected by Kansas State and shown on their web site shows that Colby received 21.14 inches of rainfall in 2006 and 18.19 inches in 2007.

## Colby student lands internship with State Department

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

A Colby student leaves next week for a dream job as an intern for the State Department at the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels.

Clarissa Unger, daughter of Jeff and Marilyn Unger of Colby, will leave Jan. 15 for Belgium.

Unger, 22, is a senior at the University of Kansas majoring in political science and prelaw, with an emphasis on international studies.

She will be an intern with the department's Bureau of Public Affairs. Unger is one of four students across the nation who will serve as volunteer interns at the mission over the next three months.

She started the application process in June, she said, and the window of opportunity to apply for the position was small — just 30 days.

She said she spent many hours filling out papers, submitting transcripts, resumes and participating in a telephone interview.

Acceptance by the State Department hinged on qualifying for security clearance, which finally came just before Thanksgiving, she said. After all that, she added, the prize was well worth the wait.

Unger's duties will include public relations and information research, which she will share with U.S. policy makers at the mission. However, she said, her assignments could shift once she arrives in Brussels.

The mission maintains relations with the central administration of the European Union, a 27-member alliance of nations once known as the Common Market. The union has 495 million citizens, according to its web site.

Unger said her interest in international studies started with a friend of the fam-

ily who occasionally hired international workers at harvest. She said the more she learned of the different cultures they represented, the more her interest grew.

She spent a month in Chicago this past summer working with the Obama presidential campaign. She became director for the "Students for Obama" campaign for the western region of the country. Her duties kept her busy organizing campus campaigns and working with students to get them involved in the political process.

After returning to Lawrence in August, she was named deputy state director for the Obama campaign in Kansas.

At the end of her college sophomore year, Unger studied in Brussels, Germany, France and Ireland, and she spent time in London during her junior year at KU.

During her travels, she said, she no-

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## Audit asked on inventory for sheriff

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press  
aheintz@nwkanas.com

Sheriff-elect Rod Taylor and his chosen undersheriff, Marc Finley, asked Thomas County commissioners last week to have a third party conduct an inventory and audit of the sheriff's equipment.

County Clerk Shelly Harms said commissioners approved retaining the county's auditors, the certified public accountant firm Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball, to perform a testing inventory audit of the Law Enforcement Center on Tuesday, said commissioner Ken Christiansen. Commissioner Paul Steele said Wednesday the commissioners had yet to receive a report from the auditors.

There are 1,986 items listed on the sheriff's inventory with a value of \$277,576. Taylor said there were about 147 items listed as disposed of and about 114 items without a listed location.

"There has been a lack of accountability in this inventory," the sheriff-elect said.

Sheriff Mike Baughn said Tuesday he had nothing to hide and he welcomed the audit. He said there are problems with inventory and things had been lost or disposed of.

"This has nothing to do with dishonesty," Baughn said. "It's just a case of sloppy bookkeeping."

"Things got lost and people didn't report it, and things got broken that were not reported."

Taylor was critical of a sniper rifle he said Baughn sold to Undersheriff Allen Marcum for quite a bit less than the purchase price. He said this was unfair to the taxpayers.

Baughn said Marcum wanted to buy the rifle, so he took the issue to the county commissioners. The commissioners went to gun manufacturers to get estimates on

how much the used gun should be worth, he said. They eventually agreed to allow Marcum to buy the gun for \$1,100.

Taylor said he was not happy that the inventory lumped together equipment bought with money from the drug forfeiture fund and the county general fund. There were something like 464 items purchased with drug forfeiture money in 2008 for a total of \$162,276, he said.

Baughn said he hoped the county treasurer would eventually be able to set up a law enforcement fund so the drug money would be put under the budgetary process.

In other news, the commission:

- Approved paying bills for the Road and Bridge Department for \$123,584, the noxious weed department for \$33,863, and all other accounts payable for \$98,431 and payroll for \$294.

- Approved payment of \$1,824 to the Kansas Association of Counties for dues.

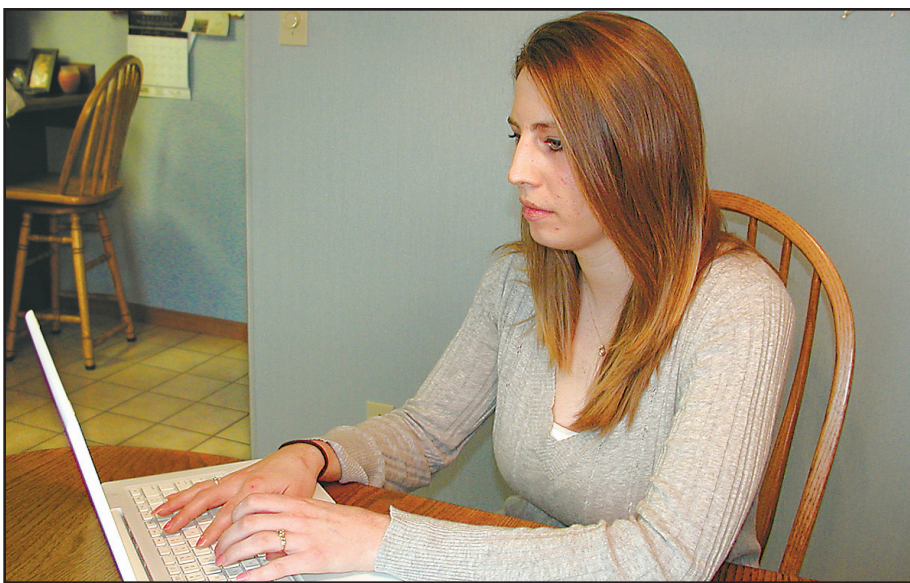
- Agreed to pay Custom Energy, the consulting company that hired Roofmasters to work on the Law Enforcement Center roof project, \$30,757 for its services.

- Authorized Lynette Koon, regional recycling coordinator, to transfer the ownership of the Rexford city recycling trailer to the regional group.

- Approved 2008 personal property tax abatements for Tyler J. Hills for \$667, John Wark for \$91 and Shad P. Metcalf for \$124.

- OK'd a family planning contract between Rawlins County and Thomas County health departments on a state grant.

- Agreed to pay a workers compensation premium for the year for \$54,043 to the Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative for Counties and a general insurance premium of \$67,301 to the Kansas Association of Counties Multi-line Pool.



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Clarissa Unger kept up to date with communications from the State Department as she prepared to leave for a three-month internship in Europe.

### Deadline near for fitness plan

Friday is the deadline to join an eight-week nutrition and fitness program sponsored by Thomas County Extension and Colby Recreation Department in place of the annual health fair. Registration for the Wise Up and Count Down Thomas County program must be received at the extension office or city recreation office by 5 p.m. Friday. No late registrations will be accepted. The cost is \$30 per person; the program is for teams of four.

### Church offers gospel concert

The Colby Berean Church, 1000 S. Franklin, plans

a free concert at 5:30 p.m. Sunday featuring the Ball Brothers, a southern gospel group. For information, call (785) 443-3590.

### Group plans senior potluck

The group More Fun Together is looking for anyone over 50 who is widowed, divorced, separated, has a partner in nursing home, never married or otherwise lives alone. The group plans a potluck at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Colby Presbyterian Church, 515 W. Fifth St. Table service and beverage will be provided. The building is handicapped accessible, with an elevator at the east door. For questions, call 462-6342 or 460-3879.

### Museum offers soup, thought

On the third Thursday of the next three months, the Prairie Museum of Art and History will offer

Food for Thought programs with a soup lunch and history program from noon to 1 p.m.. Different presentations will be offered on Jan. 15, Feb. 19 and March 19, with presenters including Mike Baughn, Evelyn Hoyt-Ward, Doris Johnson and Ray Imhof. Call the museum at (785) 460-4590 for details.

### Dance team fixing soup, chili

The Colby High School dance team plans a soup supper from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 16, at the Colby Community Building before the Eagles basketball games. On the menu are chili and cream of potato, homemade chicken-noodle and cream of broccoli soups, beverages, brownies and krispy-rice treats. Donations will be taken for the team.

### Church to hold life seminar

A "Life Overflowing" seminar will be presented

by DVD with a brown bag lunch on Saturday, Jan. 17, at Redeeming Love Ministry, 345 N. Franklin. Bible College credit is available. For questions or reservations, call (785) 650-2375.

### Heartland planning barbecue

Heartland Christian School invites everyone to their annual barbecue pork dinner from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18, at the school, 1995 W. Fourth St. The menu includes pork, corn, salad, baked potato and dessert. Donation for the school will be accepted.

### Pets available for adoption

Colby Animal Clinic has a black lab and a tiger-striped kitten available for adoption. Lost or strayed animals are also brought to the clinic. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.

