



# COLBY FREE PRESS

50¢

Thursday

February 12, 2009  
Volume 120, Number 24  
Serving Thomas County since 1888

8 pages



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

National Honor Society member Breck Aramberger (above) served course No. 6 Wednesday to his proud grandparents, Bill and Shirley Funk, at the Valentines Banquet put on by the Colby High chapter of the National Honor Society. Quinlynn Woofler (below), a senior member, made a cute Valentine as she served the main course with a smile.

## Society puts on big feed

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

The Colby High chapter of the National Honor Society held its first Valentine's banquet Wednesday evening in the Commons area of the high school.

Society students planned and served a seven-course meal to around 115 parents, family members and friends.

"The logistics for planning for a seven-course meal were overwhelming," said sponsor Linda Jones, "but the main goal was to teach the students how to function on committees."

Besides a Tuscan menu, the students planned quizzes, contests and dinner music for the evening. It was a crowd pleaser.

Jones said the organization has been in operation here for about 20 years, with an average of 30 students qualifying for membership each year. This year's enrollment is 31, including 12 seniors

Membership is based on a set of criteria set out by the society, based on four characteristics, she said: Scholarship (at least a 3.75, or A-, grade average), good character, leadership and a willingness to serve.

A five-member board made up of faculty members checks the grade averages, extending an invitation to prospective members, and reviews the students' applications. Members this year are Donna Roberts, art teacher; Roni Dietz and Gordon Rasmussen, math; Brad Wildeman, science; and Aaron Lamble, social studies. Students are then voted on by the entire faculty.



## Retail sales brighter; jobless claims down

WASHINGTON (AP) — Good news and bad news on the economy.

Nearly 5 million Americans continued to draw jobless benefits late last month, and new requests again exceeded 600,000 as companies lay off scores of workers amid a deepening recession.

The number of new jobless applications dropped, however, and retail sales rose unexpectedly in January, reversing six months of decline and following a dismal holiday season. Analysts said the jump was unlikely to last, partly because of the weak job market, however.

The Labor Department said that the number of initial jobless benefit claims dropped to a seasonally adjusted 623,000, from an upwardly revised figure of 631,000 the previous week. The latest tally still was above predictions of 610,000 claims.

And in a sign that laid-off work-

ers are having difficulty finding new work, the number of people claiming benefits for more than one week rose to 4.81 million from 4.78 million, the highest total since records began in 1967. The continuing claims data lag new claims by a week.

An additional 1.5 million people are receiving benefits under an extended unemployment compensation program approved by Congress last year, bringing the total number of recipients to 6.3 million.

Continuing claims are up sharply from a year ago, when the figure was 2.7 million.

"The smaller-than-expected decline suggests that the recent spike in claims reflects a fundamental deterioration in labor market conditions rather than statistical noise," David Resler, chief economist at Nomura Securities, wrote in a research note.

Meanwhile, the Commerce

Department reported today that retail sales jumped 1 percent in January, defying expectations of a 0.8 percent drop. The rise in sales follows a 3 percent plunge in December, which marked the weakest holiday selling season since at least 1969.

But higher gasoline prices and sales, and buyers snapping up other items on post-holiday discounts appeared to aid last month's results.

"This is a big surprise, though the net rise in sales is less impressive than it looks because (December and November) were revised down by 0.3 percent each," Ian Shepherdson, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics, wrote in a research note. "The headline relief today is welcome but it is unlikely to last."

Business inventories, meanwhile, plummeted in December by

See "ECONOMY," Page 3

## Students score big in awards

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press  
aheintz@nwkanas.com

Colby High School art students won awards for 18 of 20 entries at the Western Kansas Scholastic Art Awards this month.

Donna Roberts, art instructor at the high school, said she was pleased with the awards her students won this year.

"They did really well," she said.

This is the third year Colby students have participated in the Scholastic awards, Roberts said. The art projects had to be turned in at Ulysses on the last week of January. Roberts said schools from 31 counties in the western third of Kansas participate in the contests. Each is allowed to turn in 20 entries.

This year, 360 pieces of artwork were judged by Jeanie Gustafson, a professional ceramics artist with

See "AWARDS," Page 3



## Library friends after members

The Friends of the Library have launched their 2009 membership campaign to raise money to help Colby's Pioneer Memorial Library pay for supplemental programs beyond what tax dollars will do.

The organization had 468 memberships last year. Librarian Melany Wilkes said they don't have a definite goal in mind for this year, but they would like to raise \$5,000 and increase the number of memberships.

Memberships are available for \$10 for singles, \$25 for families and \$25 for businesses. Ralph Fischer serves as president.

The Friends pay for special programs at the library, mostly for children, said Judy Kleinsorge, children's librarian. The summer reading program, for instance, touches youngsters from preschool through eighth

grade with outside programs, including reading challenges, musicians, small theater and puppeteers.

The Library in Motion program introduces middle school kids to a world of learning outside of books and Internet resources, she said. It follows a theme of "see, touch, feel," with hands-on experiences.

Friends donations provide the seed money to make all these programs available to Colby youngsters. The group also can provide matching money when the library applies for grants.

"Other librarians are amazed at the programs we are able to offer the kids in our community," Kleinsorge said, "and it is all because of the generosity of Friends of the Library."

For questions, call the library at 460-4570.

## Briefly

### County van off Friday, Monday

The Thomas County transportation van will not run on Friday because the driver is on vacation that day, or on Monday, which is President's Day. All county offices, the landfill and the Health Department will be closed Monday for the holiday. The van will resume service on Tuesday. For questions, call the county clerk's office at 460-4500.

### Deadline Monday for art class

Anyone who wants to enroll in the High Plains Art Club's Portrait Painting Workshop Friday and Saturday, Feb. 20 and 21, at the Colby Community Building, needs to make a reservation by Monday. Participants how to work with oil portraits. To register and get a list of what to bring, call Marlene Carpen-

ter at 460-7656; Ruth Hughes at 462-2876 or Marj Brown at 462-3515.

### Library offers books for sale

Pioneer Memorial Library will hold its annual Book Lovers sale in the basement from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Come and browse and buy from a selection of used books.

### Justice scholarships available

The Thomas County Community Foundation is looking for applications for criminal justice scholarships to attend Colby Community College. Money comes from the Colby Police Department Special Law Enforcement Fund and the Cory R. Wang Memorial Scholarship. For an application, contact the foundation office at 350 South Range,

Suite 14, in Colby. These must be postmarked by Tuesday, March 10. Call Melinda Olson at 460-9152 for information.

### Academy students offer soup

Thomas County Academy parents, teacher and students plan a soup supper at the Community Building from 3 to about 8 p.m. Friday during the Colby High basketball games. Soup and desserts will be served for a donation. Stop by check out displays of the students work. Money raised will be used for a wagon trip along the Butterfield Trail. For information, call teacher Teresa Morgan at 460-5075 or e-mail morgan@colbyeagles.org.

### Dance team to help parents

The Colby High Dance Team wants to babysit for you on Valentine's Day. Bring your child, age 3 to 10, to the Community Building from 6 to 9 p.m. for

open gym, games, snacks and movies. Cost is \$10 per child. The money may be used for a trip to the Liberty Bowl in Memphis next year. For information, call coach Denita Rodgers at 460-1325.

### Scout crew whips up pancakes

Boy Scout Venture Crew 157 plans a pancake feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Community Building. Donations will be used for trips and service projects. The group, part of Boy Scouts of America, is open to both boys and girls. For questions, call Jan Barnum, 462-6503.

### Court offices to close for class

Thomas County District Court offices at the courthouse will close from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday for training. For information, call the court clerk's office at 460-4540.

