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Cynthia Haynes/Colby Free Press

Sweet music on road

Andrew Salvador from Burlington, Colo., (above) conducted the "Pride of the Prairie Orchestra" on Sunday at The Gateway in Oberlin. The orchestra, which rehearses in Colby, is made up of musicians from all over northwest Kansas and eastern Colorado. Cello player Haley Kistler, Colby, (right) concentrated on her music during the concert, which included tunes ranging from "The Star Spangled Banner" to "The Lord of the Dance" and "Piano Concerto in A Minor." Sharon Kriss, pianist, (below) is retiring from the orchestra at the end of this season.



Commissioners plan for last meeting in February

The Thomas County commissioners will meet from 9 a.m. to noon Friday for their final session of the month. Sheriff Rod Taylor and Under-sheriff Mark Finley plans to come talk about a transfer of money. Clerk Shelly Harms will be in to talk about buying computers and election equipment. Treasurer Donita Applebury also needs new computer gear. Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan is on the agenda to talk about a resolution, plans for Severe Weather Awareness Week and some communications gear that isn't working. Custodians Darrin Bell and Ron

Roeder are scheduled for a closed-door session on personnel matters. Commissioners will have a resolution to set a delinquent-tax sale and one on services for the disabled. Other topics up for discussion include a question on whether the city or county is responsible for maintaining East Willow Drive. Upcoming meetings include one with township officers and the Road and Bridge Department at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 17, at the county office complex. A regional meeting on wind energy is set for Friday, March 6, in Garden City.

Death penalty may be banished

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — The Senate Judiciary Committee is being urged to support a bill abolishing the Kansas death penalty law. Opponents of the law testified before the committee Thursday. One argument was that the death penalty is a waste of money for the state at a time when it's trying to find ways to cut spending because of the economy. They also said there's the risk of executing an innocent person. The committee plans to conclude its hearing Friday, after taking testimony from supporters of the law. It may vote then on whether to send the repeal bill to the chamber for debate. Kansas is among eight states where there are efforts to repeal the death penalty. The state has had the death penalty since 1994 and hasn't executed anyone. Ten people are under sentence of death.

County looks for new home for lions, tigers

By Andy Heintz
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A lion attack on Saturday prompted the Thomas County Commissioners to hold a special meeting Wednesday afternoon to decide what to do about three lions and two tigers living just outside of Oakley. Bradley Buchanan, who lived and worked at the Free Breakfast Inn, was bitten after he put his hand into the lion's cage, Sheriff Rod Taylor said. Buchanan was intoxicated at the time, the sheriff said. On Wednesday, the commissioners met with the sheriff, County Clerk Shelly Harms, County Attorney Bruce Flipse and Connie Walden, a registered nurse representing County Medical Health Director Gary Slavens. The animals, they learned, lived near the motel, which is north of Oakley off U.S. 83. Jeff Harsh, owner of the motel and the cats, said he was loading meat for the animals when he heard a scream at about 7 p.m. The gate to the perimeter fence around the lion cage was open, Harsh said. He said he ran to the cage and saw that Buchanan had his arms over the door and stuck in the enclosure. Harsh said he hit the animal with a steel pipe until the female lion released Buchanan. He then said he drove Buchanan to the Citizens Medical Center. Later that night, Buchanan was

taken to the Swedish Medical Center in Denver. He has since been released. Sheriff Taylor told the commissioners that, starting this afternoon, the perimeter around where the lions are living will be made off limits to the public. He said, his office is working with an Oakley veterinarian to have blood drawn from all three lions to test for disease. If the blood results come up negative, he said, the Detroit Zoological Society is interested in taking the animals. The zoo is worried, he said, that the lions may have contracted three diseases that could be transmitted to the other animals living there. To take the blood samples the lions will have to be sedated, he said. If the test come back positive for any disease, he said, they will have to find another home for the animals. Taylor said People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), an animal rights group, is willing to help pay for the blood tests. Harsh said the has signed a form to release the three lions and that he commended the county commissioners want to put the animals to sleep. He added that he isn't getting rid of the cats because a man was bitten, but because he didn't have the permits needed for him to legally own the animals. He also said he is working with the animal rights group to find a home for the tigers.

College board looks at ways to reduce need of state money

By Shalee Roundtree
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Coming cuts in state money were the main topic Colby Community College board meeting on Monday. Alan Waites, vice president for business affairs, noted that 25 percent of the college's revenue comes from state funding. The current discussion in the state Legislature, he said, calls for a 4.25 percent reduction in the college's funds this year, which amounts to about \$130,000. Waites said a boost in spring enrollment, increased bookstore sales and savings from unawarded scholarships amounting to \$150,000 had offset the cut. The real problem will be with cuts in the 2009-2010 budget year, which starts July 1, he said. The board is expecting a possible 5.75 percent drop, or about \$300,000. When speculating over options to offset this, Waites made it clear that the best way to do it would

be to increase revenue rather than program cuts or layoffs. "We must vigorously pursue and achieve revenue enhancements," he said. "If we could add 50 students, we would have the required income." Trustees noted that all Kansas community colleges are facing the same cuts. Member Mark Winger mentioned some measures being taken by Fort Hays State University, such as closing buildings, a four-day work week and fewer summer courses. Board members agreed that they wanted to avoid things like that. Other matters discussed in the meeting included the big-game hunting permit being sold to a Texas man for \$5,750 and the resignation of Esther Penner, veterinary technology instructor, was accepted. Following the meeting, trustees had dinner with 19 freshman students. This session was organized to help the board evaluate what students think of the college.

Briefly

School's out on Friday

Colby School District students and teachers will get the day off Friday, when the weather is expected to be a chilly, but sunny, 45 degrees. The break is a reward to all for the district making it's "Adequate Yearly Progress" goals under the No Child Left Behind Act, said Superintendent Terril Harrison.

College offers handgun class

Colby Community College, working with Profire professional instructors, will offer Kansas "concealed-carry" handgun training 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday in the Student Union. This class is required to apply permit to carry a concealed handgun. Cost is \$145. Training for Utah certification, which allows concealed carry in 36 states including Colorado, costs \$75. Fingerprinting, photos and notarization will be offered for \$30. For information, call Barry Kaaz at (785) 460-5429.

Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has two black and white dogs, a female lab mix, and a male with longhair, available for adoption. Lost or strayed animals are often 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.

Cancer society sells daffodils

Once again, the American Cancer Society is selling flowers for its Daffodil Days fund raiser. Colby project leader Kim Barnett will be taking orders at home, 462-2997; at work, 460-2761; or by e-mail at umccolby@st-tel.net. Prices include a flower bunch for \$10, a "sunshine bouquet" for \$15, a bear and a bunch for \$25, a half case (25 bunches) for \$225 and a full case (50 bunches) for \$350. Deadline for ordering is Sunday.

Group looks for a better life

Living a full life with disabilities is the topic of a support-group meeting from 1:30 - 3 p.m. Friday at the Colby United Methodist Church high school classroom. The group is for people with mental and physical disabilities and caregivers. For information, call Doug Finley at 460-2306 or Connie Menges at 460-3112.

Benefit will help girl's family

Friends and family plan a benefit soup supper Friday for Trinity Pfeifer, a second grader at Colby Grade School, who needs hip surgery. She is the daughter of Jason and Angie Stegeman of Colby. Come in for broccoli-cheese or chicken-noodle soup, chili and drinks from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Community Building basement. Donations will be accepted. For information, call her mom at (785) 460-0227.

Legislators in town Saturday

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier and state Reps. Jim Morrison and Dan Johnson will be in Colby to talk with citizens from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. Saturday at the Quality Inn, 1950 S. Range. Everyone is invited.

Pilot safety seminar Saturday

A Federal Aviation Administration safety seminar for pilots will be held in the terminal building at Colby's Shalz Field Municipal Airport on from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Lunch will be provided. For information, call Mark Ostmeier at (785) 460-4438 or check www.faasafety.gov.



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