



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Animal-rights group looks for new homes for Oakley lions, tigers

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People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an animal-rights group popularly known as PETA, has been working with Thomas County officials for months to find new homes for three lions and two tigers living near a motel in Oakley.

Saturday, one of the lionesses, Lady, bit a man who officials said while drunk decided to put his hand into the animal's enclosure to pet her.

The effort to find new homes for the animals has gained more attention as the story of the attack has been published outlets from the *Hays Daily News* to the *Kansas City Star*, the Associated Press wire and Wichita television stations.

Lisa Wathne, a captive-animal specialist with the international group, said from her office in Seattle today that the organization got a call in May from a citizen concerned the animals, which she said were being held "a junk yard."

The group, she said, contacted former Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn, who began working with animal-rights people, the county and owner Jeffrey Harsh to

## Lion could be among last alive

By Andy Heintz

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There are very few Barbary lions left in the world, but according to Jeffrey Harsh, one has been living in Thomas County for quite some time.

Harsh, the owner of the Free Breakfast Inn at U.S. 83 and I-70 north of Oakley, has three lions and two tigers in a cage near the motel.

Harsh said Samson, the male, represents a portion of the tiny Barbary lion population still living today. His two females, Lady and Angel, are half Barbary and half Cape lion, he said.

Lady became a household name in Thomas County after

she bit Bradley Buchanan, who reportedly was drunk Saturday and put his hand inside her cage.

Harsh said he has been working with the county to find new homes for his animals, which he has had for "many years."

On his web site at theamericatrail.org, Harsh has stories about protecting and working with prairie dogs and big cats and alternative medicine. He also has information on Barbary lions, which are reportedly extinct in the wild, the last known one having been shot in the Atlas Mountains in Northwest Africa in 1922, according to both Harsh and the National Geographic Society.

find new homes for the cats.

"As part of my investigation, PETA had even arranged for three zoo specialists, one of whom was a vet, to come from California," Baughn said Thursday. "I took

them to the animal compound and they sent me reports as to their observations."

Wathne claimed Harsh has impeded the process.

"Officials have bent over back-



Photo by JEFFREY HARSH for the Colby Free Press

Lady, a lion living near Oakley, looked out of her enclosure Thursday afternoon. The big cat's area has been put off limits to visitors after she bit a man on Saturday.

wards to get this situation resolved," she said. "They've just been wonderful."

The Detroit Zoo has long been interested in taking the three lions — one male and two females, one of which bit a man on Saturday.

The zoo has offered to pay all the expenses for getting the lions tested for diseases, transporting and their future care, she said. It had been reported earlier that the

animal-rights group was planning to pay for blood tests.

While the group isn't going to pay for the lions' tests, Wathne said, it would pay for testing the tigers, which don't have anyone to take them right now.

It's a sad fact, Wathne said, that all accredited captive tiger facilities are full. In fact, she said the United States has an overabundance of captive tigers and the two

in Oakley may have to be killed if no home can be found.

"PETA has put out an appeal to the accredited zoo community," she said. "We can only hope for the best outcome."

Wathne also said that she doesn't think that any of the animals held by Harsh are Barbary lions from North Africa, as he has claimed.

"He's just deluding himself," she said.

## Golf course, lounge open to community, investors emphasize

By Andy Heintz

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Kerry Turner and Thomas Barlow, stockholders with money invested in the Meadowlakes Golf Club and Lounge, want people to know that the course and restaurant are open to the public. The key word the two emphasized is public.

Even though the course opened to the public in 2007, Barlow said, many people still view the club as a private establishment. People still refer to the place as the Meadowlakes Country Club, said Barlow.

"We are a community recreational facility," Turner said.

The golf course's future was a mystery to much of the public after former Colby resident Rory Bedore decided not to buy the course from the stockholders, who currently keep the facility up and running. But Turner said even though the sale fell through, the course and restaurant will remain open. He said he would like to see more community involvement.

"We don't want donations," said Turner. "We want participation."

People can either pay a greens fee to play 18 holes or they can

buy a season pass, he said.

Greens fees are \$20 to play 18 holes during the week and \$25 during the weekend, the men said. Golfers playing during twilight hours need only pay \$15.

Several rates for season passes offered. A family pass costs \$799 a year and a season pass for an individual is \$693. Seniors 70 and older pay \$586 and students still in grade or high school pay \$107. Season passes for college students up to age 21 cost \$186 and out-of-county season passes are \$426. Families buying a season pass for the first time are charged \$639 and individuals buying their first season pass are required to pay 533.

Buying a season pass allows golfers to play as many holes they want, said Barlow. For example, you could play 36 holes one day and three the next. Golfers must bring their own golf clubs because the facility cannot supply them.

Barlow said the course can be rented by organizations for special events.

"It's a good thing moneywise and it's a good way of bringing people together," he said.

The K-State Catbackers will be playing on the course in May, said

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ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

## Farm vehicles arrive at school last week

Freshman Keegan Strange sat on the hood of a grain truck, (above) while junior Chase Moore stood in the driver's seat and junior Matt Lindberg got behind the wheel of a tractor on "bring a farm vehicle to work day" on Monday. Lindberg (at right) sat on his tractor in the high school parking lot while Strange and Moore looked on and teacher Shawna Howe passed by on her way to class.



## Briefly

### Legislators in town Saturday

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer 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. They will have information on issues being considered and their impact. 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 Ostmeyer at (785) 460-4438 or check www.faasafety.gov.

### 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.

### 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 umcolby@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.

### Churches begin Lenten series

The Colby churches' first "Lenten Brown Bag and Bible" program at noon Wednesday will be led by the Rev. John Schmidt of Trinity Lutheran Church on the topic of Peter. The program will be in the fellowship hall of the First Presbyterian Church. Bring your own lunch; drinks will be provided.

### Two 'Pickin' bands return

The bluegrass bands that headlined the Pickin' on the Plains Festival last year will be back in Colby next Friday, March 6, at the Frahm Theater at Colby Community College. Marshall Allen Bailey and the Silver Bullets will perform at 7 p.m. and Gold Wing

Express at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at Plum Creek downtown, Farmers and Merchants Bank at Dillons and the Colby Convention and Visitor's Bureau at \$15 for adults and \$10 for youths. For information, call (800) 611-8835 or 460-7643.

### Gem Lions cooking soup, chili

The Gem Lions Club will have its annual winter soup day on Saturday, March 7, at the Community Building. The menu includes vegetable, chili and potato soups. Donations will be accepted, with profits used for community betterment. Bring used eye glasses and hearing aids for recycling. Everyone is invited.

