



COLBY FREE PRESS

County grills motel owner

By Vera Sloan

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Thomas County commissioners jumped motel owner Jeff Harsh about a \$2,900 vet bill for his lions and tigers when he appeared Thursday to argue a request for his property at the Free Breakfast Inn north of Oakley to be recognized as a homeless shelter.

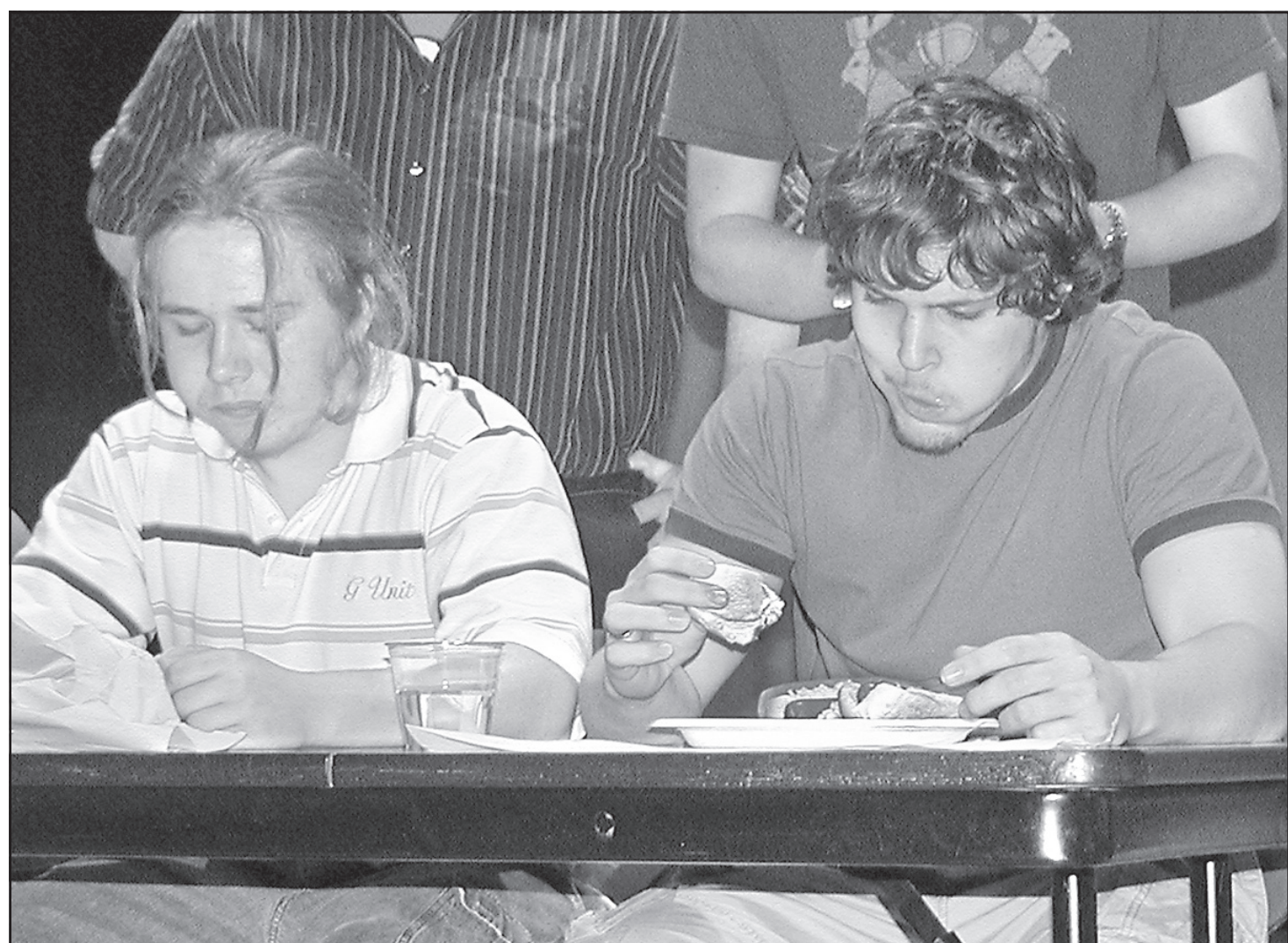
Harsh presented several arguments why it should be done, but admitted he had no written records proving the old motel has been used as a shelter. He said he plans to house veterans who have no place to call home.

Commissioners Paul Steele said he had checked with Thomas County's own retired adjutant general, Phil Finley, who assured him there are no homeless veterans here.

Steele also questioned Harsh on the number of homeless people he sees in a week, a month and over the course of a year. Harsh said he didn't keep records, but was encouraging the commissioners to understand his concern for the homeless.

During the conversation, Chairman Ken Christensen asked Harsh

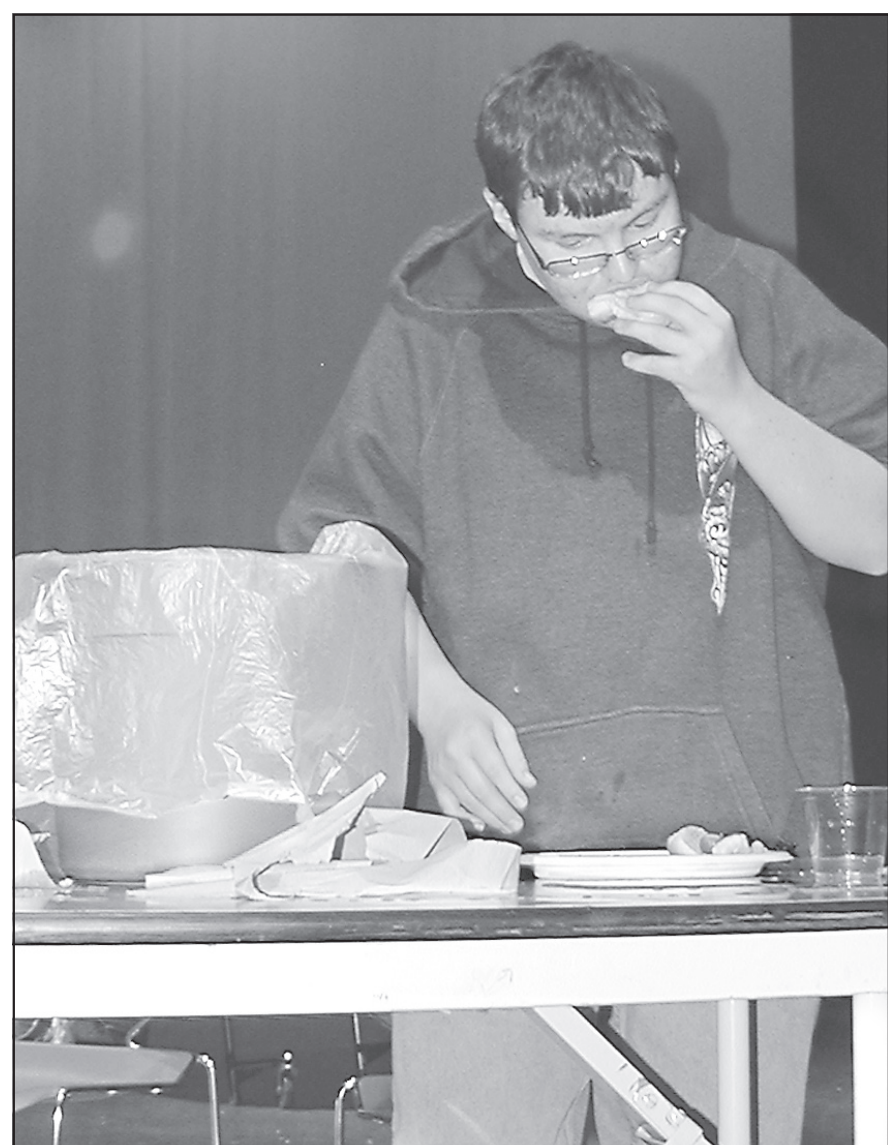
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Teens chomp dogs at contest

Sophomores Jonathan Mattison (above left) and Jonathan Griffin chowed down on some wieners during a hot-dog-eating contest that included students from all four classes Friday in the Colby High School auditorium. Seniors Avalon Verrijken (below left) and Tanner Kriss devoured their hot dogs while senior Stephen Schmidt (below right) finished wolfing down his. The contest was put on by the National Honor Society. The first place winner was freshman Braden Bandy, second place was junior Garret Rogers and third place was junior Jordan Voss. Bandy ate 12 hot dogs, Rogers 10 and Voss 8.

ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press



Medical Center to begin expansion

Citizens Medical Center will break ground Tuesday for Phase 1 of its expansion plan with a ceremony at 10:30 a.m. on the south side of the Emergency Medical Services building at 1275 S. Franklin.

Janice McCart, hospital chief executive officer, said the project should be done by Dec. 26. It will house financial services,

medical records, transcription and coding offices.

The addition will have 5,400 square feet with no basement, McCart said, financed with a loan through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Miller Construction of Goodland is the contractor.

McCart said everyone is invited to the ground breaking.

New editor enjoying town

By Vera Sloan

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A Colorado journalist with experience in Wyoming took over editing duties at the Colby Free Press last week.

Kevin Bottrell replaces Steve Haynes, owner and publisher of the paper, who has been doing double duty since the former editor, Patty Decker, moved from the area last fall.

Bottrell comes from editor and reporter positions at the Lingle

Guide, a weekly publication in Wyoming, and the Torrington Telegram, a twice-weekly nearby in the Platte River valley.

He said his reason for pursuing the job at the Free Press is because he likes the newspaper.

"It's a great paper, with a great local focus," he said.

Bottrell said he was raised in Loveland, Colo., and graduated from high school there.

He graduated from Colorado State

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Kevin Bottrell



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Daniel Blake helped Jessica Falk of the Northwest Kansas Child Care Resource and Referral Office take fingerprints from 18-month-old Kinslie Blake for the Kansas Child Identification Program.

Weekend fair helps kids stay safe

By Kevin Bottrell

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Children of all ages turned up, sometimes unhappily, at the Colby Wal-Mart on Saturday for an event that might just save their lives someday.

The Child Safety Fair, sponsored by Wal-Mart, brought experts from several agencies and organizations — including Smart Start Northwest Kansas, the Colby Fire Department and the Regional Prevention Center — to provide parents with tips, pamphlets and even comic books with information to help keep their children safe.

The Kansas Highway Patrol was on hand to check car seats and the way they're installed,

while the Atwood Masonic Lodge sponsored the Kansas Child Identification Program.

The identification program puts together a free packet of information on each child, including a photo, fingerprints, DNA swab and a short video. The video is an interview of the child answering several questions such as, "who is your best friend," and "where do you go when you want to get away."

Brett Palmer of the lodge said the video can be helpful by identifying the child's voice, giving a sample of the child's personality and showing his or her body language and how the child responds to questions.

Parents get a packet with the information, which can be given to police or other law enforcement agencies if the child ever goes miss-

ing. These packets provide more information for law enforcement to include with an Amber Alert, said Palmer and can aid in finding the missing child. Once parents are given the packet, Palmer added, the information is deleted from the program's computers.

Palmer said the program recommends that parents update their children's identification packet every two years as their appearance and other identifying traits change.

"If they go missing, the info the parents have is not going to be up to date (otherwise)," Palmer said, adding that the lodge recommends taking the packet on vacation.

"If the information is in a safety deposit box at home, it's not going to do much good," he said.

Briefly

'Wise Up' blood tests available

Wise Up, Count Down participants can get their wrap-up (fasting) blood test from 6 to 9 a.m. through Friday at Citizens Medical Center Lab. This is your chance to see how your hard work and healthier diet has "counted down" your numbers. For those who had blood work in January, this testing is free. If you did not get the blood test then, the fee is \$10. For questions, call Diann Gerstner at 460-4582.

City spring cleanup this week

The annual Colby spring cleanup will be today through Friday. Residents are urged to use this time to spruce up their yards. The city will remove items placed at the curb. (This does not include businesses or rental or commercial property.) Civic groups are asked to clean up along major streets. For information or to schedule a pickup, call 460-4410.

Thrivent to work at center

Members of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will be cleaning and preparing a planting site from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Prairie Senior Living Center and then plant flowers from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday. This is a "Join Hands" project in conjunction with the city-wide clean up. For questions, call 460-2443.

College honoring the Smiths

Colby Community College plans a reception for Dr. Floyd and Mary Smith at 3 p.m. Wednesday in the Student Union. The Smiths have been chosen to receive the 2009 honorary degrees. Everyone is invited. For questions, call Debbie Schwanke at 634-9350.

Ag students sell produce

Colby High School FFA members and the agricul-

ture class are selling greenhouse produce, plus a variety of vegetable, flowering and landscaping plants. Greenhouse hours are 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. weekdays or by appointment at 240 N. Copeland, east of Denen Field. For information, contact teacher Shawna Howell-Hoffman at 460-5320 or showell@colbyea-gles.org

City to pick up grass clippings

City crews are picking up grass clippings. Clippings must be at curbside by 8 a.m. on your regular trash day in a separate tipper can from household trash. Put clippings in the tipper loose, not in plastic bags. For questions, call the Public Works office at 460-4420.

Day of Prayer here Thursday

Colby will mark the 58th annual National Day of Prayer, with the theme "Prayer — America's Hope,"

at a community service from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. Thursday on the steps of the Thomas County Courthouse. People will gather to pray for our nation, state, community, schools and homes. This event is open to anyone and everyone who believes in the power of prayer. For information, call Joy Rothfuss at the Colby Wesleyan Church, (785) 462-8391.

Another service will be from 7 to 8:30 p.m. that night in the Little Theater of the Community Building. It is a nondenominational event of praise and prayer for the needs of the nation, state and community. For information, contact Karen Merryman at 443-3715.

