



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Many schools showing higher graduation rate

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Even in the midst of state budget cuts, American schools have some good news to report about graduation rates.

A report, released on Tuesday by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, said the national graduation rate increased by almost 3 percent over the past decade. The report is using data from 1996 through 2006, the most recently available data, as well as projections through to the 2009 school year.

Kansas was one of the majority of states to also see an increase. According to the report, 75.4 percent of Kansas seniors graduated

in 2006, compared to 72.8 percent in 1996.

Several states saw decreases of more than 1 percent, the highest being Nevada.

Locally, Colby School District Curriculum Director Diana Wieland said the graduation rate has increased. The most recent concrete data, from 2007, showed the district had a 91.5 percent graduation rate. Wieland said the rate was down from 2006, but has increased for 2008. Each year, she said, the school district is improving its approach to career and technical education.

"Our graduation rate is continuing to rise," Wieland said. "When you see that relevance in your

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## Fair security to be handled by off-duty cop

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The Thomas County Fair Board approved hiring an off-duty officer to work at this year's county fair which starts on Monday, July 26 and ends on Saturday, Aug. 1.

At their meeting Thursday, the board agreed to pay the officer \$100 a night to work from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. from Monday thru Friday. Sheriff Rod Taylor attended the meeting and told the board that he thought there would be an officer on his staff willing to work at the fair.

The board also approved allowing the Oak Ridge Boys to eat at the 4-H building free of charge during the fair. The band, known for their country and gospel songs, will be performing at the fairgrounds on Sunday, July 26.

Sports announcer Rich Epp said tickets to see the music group are available at J. B. Meat Market, Dillons, Peoples State Bank and Farmers and Merchants Bank. Tickets are being sold at the stores for \$20 and they will be sold at the door for \$25. For more information contact Epp 443-1994.

In other business, the fair board:

- Approved the Kiwanis Club having a fireworks display at the fairgrounds on the 4th of July, which will be on a Saturday this year.

- Agreed to allow the Lions Club to do a hot dog feed at the 4-H building room, also on the 4th of July.

- Heard that Andy Blackhart had agreed to be the judge at Demolition Derby on the week of the fair

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

## Hospital holds awards picnic

Citizens Medical Center held a community meeting and picnic Thursday. Volunteers from the hospital served fried chicken to community members (above photo). At the meeting, the hospital was given the Regional Business Appreciation Month Award. Jim Stanley, president of Sunflower Bank, who nominated the hospital for the award, was on hand to congratulate hospital Administrator Janice McCart (right photo). The hospital is also up for the Governor's Award of Excellence, which will be given out at the Kansas Cavalry Encampment on June 25.



## Motorcycle run to stop in town

By Andy Heintz  
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Dave Barr, a double-amputee Vietnam War veteran who has ridden his motorcycle on six continents and holds two Guinness Book world records, will ride his motorcycle into Colby on Monday, Aug. 31, along with several fellow bikers to help raise money

to build a Fisher House for the families of injured soldiers.

A Fisher House is a home built for families of wounded soldiers on the grounds of military and Veterans Affairs hospitals. The bikers' stop in Colby is part of a coast to coast nine-day trip known as The Honor Run.

Jim Oliver, branch manager of Oliver and Associates and author of "Lucille and XXX" – a story

about his trip around the world on his motorcycle – will be the group's state coordinator in Colby. He said he will be making sure they have a place to gas up and he will make hotel arrangements for the group. Oasis has agreed to block off a few pumps to give the riders a place to gas up, said Oliver.

Oliver said he will be joining the bikers the next day when they

take off for Denver. After the riders arrive in Colby there will be a festival featuring a dinner and speeches by some of the bikers, including Barr. Oliver said he hopes high schoolers will attend the festival to hear Barr speak because he is a great motivational speaker. He wants the festival to be in Fike Park. Oliver said he will probably

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VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Longtime Colby resident Thurman Cox worked as a re-upholsterer for many years. Cox is also a World War II veteran.

## Veteran shares lifetime in Colby

By Vera Sloan  
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To those who have lived in Colby for very long, the words "re-upholster" or "fishing" immediately conjure up the name, Thurman Cox.

Cox said he started his re-upholstery career as a kid, learning to make mattresses in Waco, Texas.

"When I thought I'd learned quite a bit, I went to Abilene, Texas as a mattress maker," he said. "I couldn't get along with my boss, so I just packed up and came to Colby to live with Mr. Overton, my uncle by marriage, who had a mattress and re-upholstery shop here, and he hired me."

Cox said Overton went to Texas during the winter, so he had to find odd jobs to do until

he returned and opened the shop back up. He remembers one job in particular in Wyoming.

"I threw 90 pound bags of spuds up into a moving truck," he said. "I got paid \$1.50 a day, and if you were strong enough and quick enough to throw two bags they'd pay \$2.50 a day. I got to where I could do it – I'd balance one bag between my legs, and throw, and grab the other before the truck got away. Maybe that's how I got such strong arms. That was hard work, but it was the most money I ever made in my life then, back in 1938, and '39."

From there, Cox went to school in Denver and wound up going to San Diego, to work at Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Company making airplanes.

He married Esther Brier in 1941, and enlisted in the Air Force in 1942. He said his experience with aircraft helped him get into the Air Force and kept him out of basic training.

Cox flew "the Hump" – the southeastern end of the Himalayas between India and China – 22 times, he said, and was a member of the famed "Flying Tigers." He has memories of seeing Mt. Everest and of flying at 22,000 feet with below zero temperatures in an unheated aircraft.

"I survived two plane crashes over there," he said. "One was when we were on our way to a forward base, with 28 men on board. The fog was thick and the field we were supposed to land on had granite peaks all around it. We were out of fuel and were flying on fumes."

"The pilot said he'd fly about 200 feet off the ground to see if there was a landing strip, and if there wasn't any, then he'd take the plane up and we'd all bail out. He sighted a strip, and we went down. It was a fighter field, and the

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## Briefly

### Team plans car wash, bake sale

The Colby High School dance team will hold a car wash and bake sale from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday in the Dillons parking lot. Proceeds will help the team pay for dance camp. Pre-sale tickets are available by contacting any member. For information, call Karen Raymond at 443-0952.

### High school to hold workshop

All students entering grades six to nine are invited to a free 21st Century Learner Workshop at Colby High School on Thursday and Friday. The workshop will cover tech topics such as web applications, safe learning and having fun with technology. Bring your sack lunch for these two fun-filled days. This workshop is accepting only the first 60 registrants. For information, call Megan Pope at 460-5004.

### Library offers cool retreat

The Pioneer Memorial Library is inviting families

to *Cool Off From Summer* at 7 p.m. next Thursday in the library basement. Nancy LePell will be talking about her travels through the South Pacific on a sailboat. Refreshments will be served. For information, call the library at 460-4470.

### City to spray for mosquitoes

The City of Colby will fog for mosquitoes weekly, beginning next week. On Mondays or Tuesdays, crews will fog from Webster Street south. On Thursdays or Fridays, they will work from Webster Street north. Please check your yards and empty anything that holds stagnant water – such as cans, swimming pools, tires and the like – to help keep the mosquito population to a minimum. For information, call the Public Works Department at 460-4420.

### Nursing home plans dog show

The Colby Care Center will hold a doggie fashion show at 2 p.m. Saturday, July 11. Dress up your

dogs and bring them by, along with a \$5 donation for the Residents Activity Fund. Veterinarian Tammy Swarts will judge the entries and award prizes, along with advice for dog owners. For information, call Amanda Hillis at 462-6721.

### Camp set for Tuesdays

The Colby Wesleyan Church is offering "Tuesdays @ 10," a free summer day camp for children 4 to 12. Kids are invited to participate in the food, fun, games and God's love from 10 a.m. to noon every Tuesday through July 28. This year's "Son Rock Camp" will include nature hikes and outdoor activities with lunch. To register, or for information, call the church office at 462-8391.

### Church holding Bible study

The Colby Wesleyan Church will offer a 12-week Beth Moore Bible study, "Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy," from at 6:30 to 8 p.m. Wednes-

days through Aug. 19 at the Pioneer Memorial Library's community room. No homework is required and discussion will focus around the videos. For information, call the church at 462-8391.

### College pool open weekdays

The Colby Community College indoor swimming pool is open to the public for lap swimming from 5 to 7 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday. Open swimming is 4 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Cost for general admission is \$3. Monthly and yearly passes are available. Call Kipp Nelson at 460-5476 for additional information.

