

# Thomas County Conservation manager

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press  
vsloan@nwkansas.com

A job normally thought to be filled by men has been taken over by women, at least in the state of Kansas.

Debbie Potter, manager of the Conservation office in Thomas County said she is one of one hundred women in Kansas to fill that role.

“Out of the 105 counties, there are actually only five men in the management role,” she said.

Potter, who grew up in the Winona area and graduated from Triplains High School said she got married right out of high school and was a ranch and farm hand with her husband Blake and his parents. She was no stranger to farm work, as she grew up on a farm, but was fortunate to have brothers who did the heavy work.

Potter said she spent a lot of her time riding horses, showing horses, and enjoying being in 4-H.

“I’m a regular 4-H addict,” she said. “After I got married, I helped my husband and in-laws and we did a lot of ranching. Then when I got to be a mom, I was a stay-at-home mom until my children got into school.

“When I decided to work outside the home, I went to work at the bank in Winona and stayed there for 16 years.”

While she was employed at the bank, one

of the supervisors at the Conservation Service told her there was an opening for manager and she should apply for it. Potter said she made the application and two days later she got a phone call saying if she wanted the job it was hers.

She took over her new job in August of 2008.

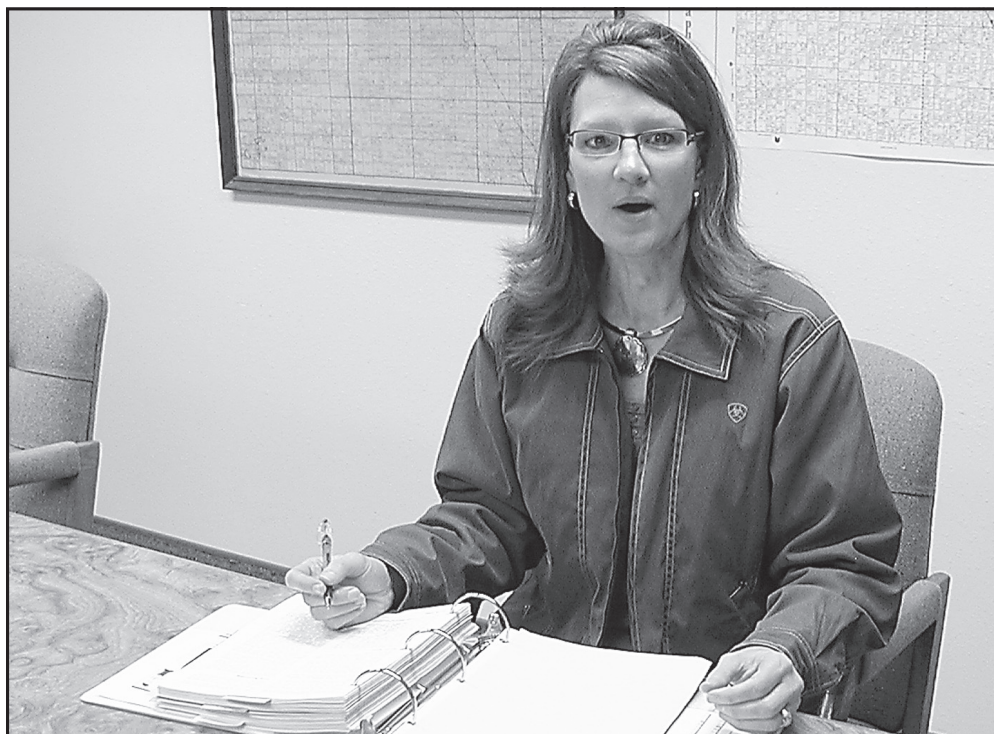
She said she likes the work at the conservation service and keeps busy. As a member of the Northwest Kansas Conservation and Environmental Alliance, her duties include promoting soil conservation education, where they go into the schools and educate students on conserving and preserving natural resources, especially the land and water.

One of the things they emphasize in soil conservation are the newer technologies of conservation such as no till and minimum tillage, so that the farmer/producer can spend less and have more production.

Potter said that through the Natural Resources Conservation Services group, they do a cost share program through the state with water resources such as terraces, diversion, and waterways.

They do a lot of helping with septic issues, where septic systems leach down in the water, and they lend a helping hand to help solve the problems.

She said her office is a member of the eight-county Conservation Environmental Alliance which sends all the fourth graders in the eight



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Spending her entire life in the farming industry makes Debbie Potter a natural to take the reins at the conservation office in Thomas County.

surrounding counties to a program each April to receive kids’ conservation education on water recycling, animal identification through the “skies and skulls” program, and a hands-

on program with reptiles.

They held their first “Women in Denim” retreat this year. The program is a day-long agriculture-based retreat for women. They

## Thank You For All Your Hard Work And Dedication!



Pictured Left to right, back row: Ashley Heier, Carlegh Dempewolf, Kasie Stevenson, Katelyn Shiltz, Nikki Buskirk and Danielle Freeman. Middle Row, Left to right: Becca Gray and Sherri Overton. Front, Center: Dana Dempewolf.



2227 S. Range Ave • 785-462-6565

## The Pride of Colby... Our Working Women!



Pictured Back Row, Left to right: Anita Porter, Relda Galli and Sally Peterson. Front Row, Left to right: Ashley Wright, Kristen Ostmeier and Jeanette Hockersmith.



www.fnb.com  
Member FDIC

785-460-2000

1195 S. Range • Colby • www.fnb.com

