

Be sure to vote Tuesday

75¢



COLBY FREE PRESS

Monday

November 2, 2009

Volume 120, Number 171

Serving Thomas County since 1888

8 pages

Colby going to the polls on pool issue

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Voters will decide Tuesday whether Colby will increase its sales tax to pay for a new swimming pool and fire station once and for all on Tuesday.

Polls will open at 7 a.m. Tuesday at the Colby Community Building and close at 7 p.m.

The only issue on the ballot for this special election is a proposed 3/4 of 1 percent sales tax for retail businesses within the city limits for the next 10 years. The money raised, estimated to be more than \$1 million per year, would go to pay for a new aquatics center and the new fire station. The increase would bring the total sales tax in Colby to 7.3 percent.

The tax would expire after 10 years. If there is money left over, the council would decide how to spend it, possibly on the pool or fire station.

Aquatic Design Consultants, an engineering firm out of Louisburg, has drawn up a preliminary plan for the new "aquatics center." It would include a lazy river with a zero-depth entry area, slides and an obstacle course, as well as a six-lane competition pool with high and low diving boards. With land purchase and design fees, the center is expected to cost about \$5 million.

The location for the center has not yet been chosen. Some of the candidates are east of the Colby Recreation Complex, several sites near Colby High School or north

of downtown on Franklin Avenue.

The current pool is more than 60 years old and has an inadequate heating system, city officials say.

The fire station – completed earlier this year – is a replacement of the old bays at City Hall, some of which collapsed under the weight of snow from a storm in 2003. The city has \$2.5 million in bonds from the construction to be paid. The sales tax would allow the city to pay that back in 10 years. The original plan was to use a property tax and pay back the bonds over 20 years, but a public outcry led the city to pursue other ideas.

Opponents of the sales tax have said that in the current economy, an additional tax is not a good idea. With the current pool is still in working condition, they say, a new aquatics center would be a luxury the city could do without. They have also suggested that the money would be better spent on other pressing projects around town such as sidewalks.

Supporters of the sales tax say that a new pool would bring more business into Colby and keep families in Colby rather than going to pools in Oakley or Goodland. The city has said that any renovations on the existing pool would require it to be brought up to American's With Disabilities Act compliance, which would require major and expensive work.

Both supporters and opponents have noted that a sales tax is paid by visitors and county residents, not just city residents, whereas a property tax would only be paid by Colby landowners.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Cold weather clears for warm Halloween

With almost all of the snow from Friday's blizzard melted, Colby youth ended up with a very nice night got trick-or-treating on Saturday. Some of the younger kids, such as Gracie Munk (right) went early in the evening when there was still enough light. Some school events, such as the Puddle Duck Preschoolers' afternoon trick-or-treat (above) had to be postponed until today. All of the area schools were closed Friday morning because of snow packed roads, however by the afternoon many of the roads were dry. The temperature climbed into the upper 60s by Sunday afternoon, leaving only the piles of snow cleared from parking lots.



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby student enjoys Japan trip

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkansas.com

Spending two months in Japan this summer has given Kim Gerstner the travel bug.

Kim, 16 and a junior at Colby High School, has visions of studying abroad some day, anywhere from Australia to the United Kingdom, or any of the English-speaking countries in between.

"After trying to learn Japanese, I think I'll stick to English," said Gerstner, whose two-month visit to Japan in the 4-H exchange program confirmed her desire for adventure.

Gerstner, whose mother Diann works for Thomas County Extension, and dad Chris works as

a lineman for Mid-West Energy, said she spent the first month in Japan in Tokyo, living in a suburb of the metropolis of 33 million people.

"The size of the city didn't really shock me," she said. "There were other American kids there from other states, and we had a real blast."

Oddly enough, she was living near the home of Tuya Yokoyama, an exchange student who is spending the year with her family. In a city that size, of course, they never ran into each other.

"The first month there was spent learning the language (but not very much). We were surrounded by friends, that knew enough of

See "JAPAN," Page 3



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Kim Gerstner and Tuya Yokoyama didn't know each other until the beginning of school year, although Gerstner had been in Yokoyama's home town of Tokyo for two months this summer. Betty Crocker "helped" the girls make brownies Tuesday at the Gerstner home. Yokoyama said brownie mix is not common in her home country of Japan.

Japanese student experiences America

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press
vsloan@nwkansas.com

Sixteen-year-old Tuya Yokoyama from Tokyo, says she's excited to be in the United States.

The teenager is an American Field Service exchange student, living with a host family, Chris and Diann Gerstner, and attends Colby High School. She says she hopes to get into medical research when she completes her education.

As an exchange student, she said, she has a one-year visa, and will have to reapply to attend college in America. She said she hopes to study at the University of California, Los Angeles, but would consider the University of

Kansas as a second choice.

"There are 33 million people in Tokyo, and people here are a lot different. No one is interested in others in Tokyo," she said, "but here, people are interested, and they say, 'How are you?'"

"I love the United States," Yokoyama said, "and I find that many things are different here. We have no huge corn fields, or wheat fields, and there is a lot of open space in America."

"I am very surprised there is no public transportation. At my home, we are only three minutes from a subway or train station. It's very busy there."

She said she spends a lot of time studying when she is at home. Her

See "AMERICA," Page 3

Briefly

For latest flu info, call 460-4599

A hot line for answers to questions on seasonal influenza and the H1N1 flu strain will be available throughout the flu season at (785) 460-4599. The Thomas County Health Department said information about the status and availability of vaccines, priority groups and the like will be available at this number.

Hospital auxiliary needs help

The Citizens Medical Center Auxiliary is looking for volunteers to greet visitors, operate the gift shop and help patients and their families, among other things. If you'd like to become involved, call Tama Unger at (785) 460-1214 or Mary Smith at (785) 462-3387.

Coaches offer coffee, talk

Join the Colby High School football staff for "Coffee with the Coaches" at 9 a.m. Saturday and every

Saturday after home and away games at the Sports Shoppe, Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue. For information, call Eagles' Coach Chris Gardener at 460-1390.

Brewster church plans turkey feed

The Brewster United Methodist Church will hold its annual Thanksgiving turkey supper from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the church, 202 Nebraska. Donations will be accepted. For information, call Nadine Kammer at (785) 694-2456.

Trivia night planned at library

The Pioneer Memorial Library plans a Trivia Pursuit Night at 6:30 p.m. Thursday. Get your team of six to eight players together or call the library to join a team of random players. Each team will bring snack food for a potluck of chips, crackers, popcorn, veggies and the like to munch on. A prize will be given

for the winners. For questions, to call 460-4470.

Transit bus' day to be brief Friday

The Thomas County transportation van will run only from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday. For information, call County Clerk Shelly Harms at 460-4500.

Dance Friday in Colby

A singles and couples dance is planned from 7:30 to 11:30 Friday at the Casa de Burritos, 310 N. Franklin, in Colby. Granny Z will be the musician. For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 855-2341.

Women to mark World Community

The Colby chapter of Church Women United plans a lunch and worship service for World Community Day at noon Friday at the First Presbyterian Church, 515 W. Fourth St. This ecumenical movement brings

together Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox women across the United States, said Pastor Carol Rahn. World Community Day focuses on peace and justice in global society. For information, call Rahn at 462-6342.

Veterans needed for list

The Colby Free Press will be publishing the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars list of all area military veterans on Veteran's Day, Nov. 11. To be certain that we have the names of all Thomas County veterans, the Free Press would like all veterans or their relatives to please stop by the office, 155 W. Fifth St., or call 462-3963 by Friday.



8 0 4 8 7 9 1 3 8 9 8 3