



COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Thursday

November 5, 2009
Volume 120, Number 172
Serving Thomas County since 1888

8 pages

Group starts new program for area kids

By **Aubrey Spencer**
Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkans.com

If you have a heart for children and some free time in the morning, then Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County has a new volunteer program that might be the right fit for you.

Diane Stithem, community director for the organization, said a school breakfast program will begin as soon as "Bigs" and "Littles" are signed up and matches made. The Bigs in Schools Breakfast plan, a spin-off of the successful Bigs in Schools program, will need volunteers once a week for 20-30 minutes during the students' breakfast time, Stithem said.

The Bigs in Schools program is in its fourth year in Thomas County, she said. It pairs adult volunteers with students who meet at the child's school during lunch. Volunteers eat lunch, help with homework or play games at recess, Stithem said.

"Many people think they don't have time to be a Big Brother or Big Sister," Stithem said. "People are surprised to learn it only takes less than an hour a week to volunteer in our school-based program.

It is a great way for busy people to make a big difference."

In Thomas County, he said, 28 children have been matched through the Bigs in Schools program since its start in October 2006. Stithem said involvement has increased each year, growing from only five matches the first year. She said Big Brothers Big Sisters continues to grow the program at Colby, Golden Plains, Brewster and Sacred Heart schools.

"All of the schools in Thomas County are very, very supportive of the program," she said. "They allow our Bigs to come into the school and spend time at lunch or recess, and now breakfast, with their Littles."

Stithem said the breakfast program is another avenue for the Bigs and Littles to find a time that works for both parties' schedules during the week.

"Sometimes their lunch hours don't match up as easily as we'd like them to," she said, "so we are looking at utilizing the breakfast time."

Stithem said other schools across the state have similar scheduling

See "BREAKFAST," Page 3



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

University of Kansas Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little made her first official visit to Colby on Monday, meeting with alumni, elected officials and leaders of two-year "feeder" colleges. She talked after lunch with state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell, who represents northwest Kansas.

KU chancellor visits area alumni

By **Kevin Bottrell**
Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkans.com

University of Kansas Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little came to town Monday for lunch with area alumni, a quick visit to Colby Community College and a sit down with the *Colby Free Press*.

Gray-Little was named chancellor Aug. 15, coming to Lawrence from the University of North Carolina, where she was provost. The chancellor oversees all of the various KU campuses and programs around the state. In addition to the main campus in Lawrence, these include Medical Centers in Kansas City and Wichita, the research center at Parsons State Hospital and the Law Enforcement Training Center in Reno County.

"The research universities have a lot in

common," she said, "even some of the problems."

One of the main differences here, she said, is that once out of Lawrence, the terrain is much different than North Carolina, with few or no trees. Another difference is the big interest in politics among local people here.

"I don't think I've ever met so many people who are politicians or have been politicians," she said. "Interest in politics is very much an everyday thing."

Since being named chancellor, Gray-Little said, has been out on many trips around the state. In Colby she spoke at an alumni lunch and met with local officials, including College President Lynn Kreider.

In talking to people around the state, Gray-Little said, she finds different groups are looking for different things from the university. Community college presidents are look-

ing for a strong partnership with KU, which is often the destination for their graduating sophomores.

"That transition needs communication back and forth," she said.

Alumni in smaller towns such as Colby, she said, are always delighted to see the university's administrators in their town. They often put an emphasis on recruiting and programs to bring the KU graduates back to their small towns after college. Retaining young people in their hometowns is an issue all across the state, she said.

"One of the ways that it gets expressed is in ambivalence about allowing students to leave," she said.

Community college and programs such as the Medical School often take applicants

See "CHANCELLOR," Page 3

A more festive look



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

A crew from the city Public Works Department began putting up holiday decorations around town this week. Some new decorations will be added to the mix this year on Fourth Street with the "Shine in '09" Christmas trees and ornaments.

Colby chief tapped as association president

By **Andy Heintz**
Colby Free Press
aheintz@nwkans.com

Bob McLemore is a busy guy.

In his 11th year as Colby fire chief, he's settling in to a new job as president of the Kansas State Association of Fire Chiefs, representing about 300 chiefs, mostly with smaller and volunteer departments, across the state.

McLemore said was elected at the group's annual meeting Oct. 9 in Manhattan. He said the organization represents and supports Kansas fire chiefs on state-wide issues at the state Legislature and elsewhere.

"It's a good organization," he said. "We represent fire chiefs all over the state. We provide training and information for fire chiefs that

will help them in their local jurisdictions.

"Our main goal is to support state legislation policies that helps local fire departments and support training."

McLemore said a couple of things the organization has lobbied for over the years includes getting money for firefighter training and a law passed last year to allow fire fighters to stop traffic during rescue attempts and hazardous-material spills. Before the state approved the measure,

fire departments could only stop traffic during fires, said McLemore. What it amounts to is the chiefs working together to change things.

"Several voices is more powerful than one individual voice," he said.

McLemore has been on the association's board since 1999 and served as the vice president for four years. He was a district representative for northwest Kansas before that.

The organization is part of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, which pushes for fire-department-friendly policies on Capitol Hill, he said. Some of the issues they are interested in include the assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (FIRE Act), terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, staffing, wildland fires, hazardous materials, fire fighter health and safety and fire codes.

The association is also a part of the Kansas Fire Service Alliance, the chief said. The alliance also includes the Kansas State Firefighters Association and the Kansas Professional Fire Chiefs Association. The three groups will meet Dec. 4 to discuss the most

important issues facing the state's fire service today, he said.

McLemore said his organization is working with the International Association of Fire Chiefs on the Interstate Mutual Aid System. He said this program lists the resources available to all fire departments by using common terminology to describe the assets.

He said this helps departments when a large incident occurs. For example, if Colby has a tornado, the fire department can find the closest location where they can get resources needed after the disaster by logging into a computer system. This allows help to arrive quicker and it saves the department money, said McLemore. Without this system, Colby could end up waiting for something from Topeka they could have gotten from Oakley.

McLemore has been Colby fire chief since 1999.

Briefly

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.

Singles' 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.

Heartland scrapbooking day coming

Heartland Christian School with hold its fall scrapbooking day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday at the school. Prices, meals included, are \$30 for adults all day or \$15 for half a day, or \$15 for students all

or \$10 for half a day. To register, call Lucy Wood at 460-2721 or Jeanne Wilson at 462-2999.

Trinity youths selling greenery

The Trinity Lutheran Youth are selling fresh greens and accessories to arrive the week of Nov. 30, just in time for holiday decorating. Choose from among wreaths, garland centerpieces or a living tree. There is a new "Wintergreen Wreath" design this year. Orders can be shipped. Deadline is Sunday. To order or for information, call Raenette Martin at 462-3400 or Linda Pabst at 462-3497.

Thanksgiving dinner Sunday

Sacred Heart Catholic Church will have an old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sunday in the church basement. Members will serve turkey, ham and all the fixin's. Donations will

be accepted. For information, call Pat Erickson at 460-7167.

Seniors plan potluck Monday

The group More Fun Together plans a potluck dinner for people 50 or older who are alone, widowed, divorced, separated or who have partners in nursing homes at 6 p.m. Monday at the First Presbyterian Church. Bring a dish to share. Table service and beverage will be provided. The building is handicapped accessible with an elevator by the east doors. For information, call the church at 462-6342.



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