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A field trip to the museum



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

First Grade teacher Krysti Terrell pointed out the displays for her class at the Journey Stories exhibit at the Prairie Museum of Art and History on Tuesday. The museum allowed all the classes at Colby Grade School to come take a look at the exhibit for free this week as part of their Kansas Day activities.

Foundation assembling county puzzle

By Kevin Bottrell
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Schmid. Pieces will be going to all the county's grade schools. Schmid said there are 36 grade school classrooms and any who want them will get four puzzle pieces that they can decorate. The foundation will also have pieces available for middle and high school student organizations.

The year-long celebration of Thomas County's 125th birthday is under way, and one county organization has found an inventive way to get people in the spirit.

The Thomas County Community Foundation will be putting together a community puzzle. Executive Director Melinda Olson said the foundation has 750 blank puzzle pieces, about 3 by 3 inches in size, that they will be giving out in exchange for donations to the foundation's operating endowment.

Individuals and businesses can make donations to the foundation and get from one to four puzzle pieces they can decorate. Olson said the pieces will be put together into one big puzzle and put on display at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. The theme, "The Spirit of the Prairie," will go along with the 125th anniversary theme.

"We want the community to make these so they can really capture what it's like to live in Thomas County today," said Public Relations Coordinator Christina

Olson said she got the idea from a speaker, Michelle Cummings, whose company, Training Wheels, makes the puzzles.

Anyone interested can get their pieces now by going to the foundation's office, 350 S. Range. For individuals, donations of \$1 to \$49 get one piece, donations of \$50 to \$149 get two pieces and donations of \$150 or more get four pieces. Businesses can get four pieces for \$200, which also includes an edge piece and a place on a promotional plaque that will go with the completed puzzle.

Schmid said the foundation wants to have all the pieces back from the schools by May 28 and from individuals and businesses in August. The full puzzle will be unveiled at the Oct. 4 foundation board meeting, after which it will be set up at the museum.

State senate approves governor's 2009 budget cuts

By John Milburn
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Senators approved a bill Wednesday amending the current Kansas budget, ratifying cuts and transfers from government programs made by Gov. Mark Parkinson.

The 36-4 vote Wednesday sends the bill to the House, where legislators are working on a similar measure.

Senators said the bill represented the Democrat Parkinson's "heavy lifting" and it was now their turn to make choices. Among them is next year's budget, which already has a projected gap of \$400 million between revenues and expenditures.

Sen. John Vratil said there would be more pain to come for agencies as legislators continued the 2010 session, but the vote was the first chance to do what they told voters was needed to balance

the budget.

"It's sort of put up or shut up time in their minds," said Vratil, a Leawood Republican.

Passage came after a protracted debate on Sen. Jeff Colyer's amendment to restore \$22 million for Medicaid reimbursements through June 30. The cut amounts to a 10 percent reduction in the rate paid to health care providers.

Colyer, an Overland Park Republican

and physician, said the cut would have a detrimental effect statewide, putting strain on the health care system and nursing homes. His proposal failed, 24-16.

"We do not have pleasant choices, but this is the worst possible choice," Colyer said.

He and others said it was wrong to hurt providers and shun some \$60 million in federal matching funds that could help stimulate the Kansas economy.

But Sen. Susan Wagle, a Wichita Republican, said legislators would be hypocritical to try restore cuts after promising Kansans they would make do with less.

The bill includes reducing transfers in funds for highway maintenance and cutting the postage for legislators to send mailings to constituents.

Despite approval of the budget bill,

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Republican candidate talks rural issues over burgers

By Vera Sloan
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Rob Wasinger, Cottonwood Falls, originally from Hays, and running for Rep. Jerry Moran's seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, was in Colby for his fifth visit on Tuesday. He was here to hold a town hall-type meeting at J & B Meat Market on South Range.

The would-be representative said he has a heart for rural Kansas, and has knocked on over 6,000 doors in the western part of the state.

"The people of America have learned that elections have consequences," he said, "and things like livestock, energy and health issues do count. People are angry, and they are ready for a healthy change."

He says he is focusing on economic growth and prosperity for rural America.

Wasinger said it's time to tackle the out migration from rural communities. His plan calls for a "New Homestead Act," to address the out migration of

young people from rural communities, by offering incentives that would draw the younger generation back, after they have finished their education.

"Congress needs to represent rural areas, to avoid capital flight," he said. "And what the urban congressmen are doing for their areas, we need to do for rural areas."

Wasinger also talked about the livestock industry. He said he doesn't believe in country of origin labeling (COOL), and says it is simply a marketing issue and not a food safety issue. He says he would like to see Congress be more "pro producer," and says the Department of Agriculture needs to be more involved in livestock issues. He believes there is a great export potential for American beef, and producers need to have more freedom to innovate and find new ways to generate profit.

He says he wants to fight for farmers, work to create new good paying jobs, and take on a federal government that intrudes into our every day lives.

Information about the candidate is available on line at www.RobWasinger.com.



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Rob Wasinger, candidate for Sen. Jerry Moran's seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, visited with Cookie Koenig on Tuesday at J & B Meat Market. This was his fifth stop in Colby to visit with voters in a town hall-type setting and to knock on doors. Wasinger lives in Cottonwood Falls and is originally from Hays. He has five years experience in Washington, D.C., working as an aid to Sen. Sam Brownback.

Briefly

Heartland to hold barbecue

Heartland Christian School will hold its annual barbecue from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday at the school, 1995 W. Fourth St., with barbecue pork, corn, salad, baked potatoes and dessert. Donations will be accepted. For information, call the school at 460-6419.

Food delivery set for Saturday

Prairie Land food delivery will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Sacred Heart School gym, 1150 W. Sixth St. For information, call Gene Griffin at 460-3579.

County to start testing sirens

Thomas County will test the tornado sirens at noon on the first Monday of each month beginning next week, said Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan. The tests will continue all year if

weather permits. For information, call McMahan at 460-4516.

Low income tax help at library

The AARP will have a tax help seminar from 1:30 to 4 p.m. every Thursday from Feb. 2 to April 15 at the Pioneer Memorial Library. The seminar is designed to help low- and middle-income people with special emphasis on those age 60 or older. For more information, call Alvin Volk at (785) 460-2645.

Grade school to offer book fair

The Colby Grade School Parent-Teacher Organization plans a "spring" book fair with the theme "Book Fair Diner - All You Can Read" from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. next Wednesday and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 4, at the school. The event will offer new releases, children's

classics, cookbooks and bestsellers for sale. Money raised will go back into the classroom for things like textbooks and teacher projects. For information, call the school office at (785) 460-5100.

Transit van to run short days

The Thomas County transportation van will run from only from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday and next Wednesday because the driver asked for time off. For information, call Kristi Mann at the county clerk's office, 460-4500.

Students offer Monday massages

Physical therapist assistant students at Colby Community College will have their last massage clinic from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Monday in the Pierre Henry Allied Health Building, room 804. Cost for a 30-minute massages is \$12. Make appointments by calling

Trudy Wildeman at 460-4797. Walk-ins are OK. For information, call Wildeman at 460-4797.

Rotary to serve soup at game

The Colby Rotary Club will hold its annual soup supper from 5 to 7:30 Tuesday, Feb. 16, at the Colby Community Building during basketball games with Goodland. The cost will be \$4 for adults and \$2 for children 12 and under. For information, call Sara Bryan at (308) 530-8363.



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