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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

## County tries to save cash on insurance

By Vera Sloan  
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In a tight budget year, with many requests for county tax dollars, the Thomas County commissioners took a step Monday to try to save the county at least \$42,000 with a program designed to let the county keep money not used for deductibles on employee health benefits.

The county will buy health insurance with a higher deductible to get a lower premium, commissioners agreed. The savings will be set aside to reimburse any employee who goes over the \$500 deductible, up to the \$1,000 co-insurance, or the maximum out-of-pocket of \$1,500, which is

the amount employees paid in the past.

An insurance usage report from last year revealed 18 employees did not finish the deductible, and several of the employees barely made the deductible. Money paid to the insurance company at \$513 per single plan, and not used to pay claims, stays with the insurance company, because it would not have paid out anything, said Commissioner Paul Steele when the issue came up at a previous meeting. This way, any money not used will stay with the county, and will remain in the Health Reimbursement Account, until needed for eligible claims.

The higher deductible will let

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The Colts Drum and Bugle Corps' low brass section – tubas, mellophones and baritones – worked on a backwards move on the Colby High School practice fields Monday. The Colts

## Drum corps shows off in Colby

By Kevin Bottrell  
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Colby High School marching band students got to see first hand how the professionals rehearse as they watched the Colts Drum and Bugle Corps practice at the school practice fields all day Monday.

The Colts, a world-class professional marching band from Dubuque, Iowa, were on their way from the Drums Along the Rockies competition in Denver last weekend to another marching show in Hutchinson on Tuesday.

Colby band director Joey Nickols said the corps arrived in town about 3:30 a.m. Monday and set up their sleeping bags in the gym and band room. They began rehearsing on the high school practice field in the morning and continued all day, taking only brief

breaks for water, lunch and the evening hail storm. They gave an exhibition performance that night for anyone who wanted to come and took off again for Hutchinson at 11 p.m.

Nickols said the corps got a lot of strange looks from passers by as they stripped down to their instruments and not much else in the heat of the day. Ten to 15 of his band students came to watch throughout the day and more attended the evening performance.

The corps comprises 135 marching members, more than 30 staff and hundreds of volunteers. They tour around the country from June to August, with the season climaxed at the Drum Corps International Championship in Indianapolis from Aug. 12 to 14. The Colts have placed in the top 12 at the championship seven times, according to the corps' website.

Professional drum and bugle corps most often have three components: a percussion

ensemble including a marching drum line and stationary pit; a brass line including trumpets, baritones, mellophones and tubas; and a color guard.

Drums Along the Rockies is an annual competition for Division I drum corps. The Colts placed sixth out of seven corps with 74.9 out of 100 points. The top band, the Blue Devils from Concord, Calif., scored an 88, according to Drum Corps International, the corps' parent league.

In Hutchinson, the Colts competed with many of the same corps, including the Blue Devils, the Blue Knights from Denver and the Santa Clara Vanguard, as well as the Revolution from San Antonio, Texas. They scored a 74.7.

Nickols said the corps enjoyed the school's facilities and asked if they could stay here again.

## Pageant winner heads to Wichita

By Vera Sloan  
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Fifteen-year-old Tomi Miller says she has been competing in pageants since she was 12, and will be leaving for Wichita on Tuesday to take part in precision competition on Thursday and Friday at the National American Miss pageant.

She says past experience netted her the title of America's National Miss Jr. Teen, Kansas.

"It's all about introduction," she said. "We're supposed to have a minute-long self introduction, and that's hard."

She said each contestant must bring a book or a bear to the competition for firemen, police offi-

cers or hospitals to give to children who have been in dangerous or tragic situations.

"I think that's a pretty neat thing," she said, "because it gives little kids some comfort when they're going through a bad time."

"This is my first year for precision competition," she said, "but I have chosen to not do a talent performance. I'll be doing two commercials instead, a Band-Aid commercial and a Clearasil commercial."

She said she has a coach this year, something she has not had in the past. Something she has done in the past, however, is find sponsors to

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Tomi Miller



For part of the day, the Colts' drum line broke off to practice on their own, with the quad players – whose four drums hang from a harness in front of them – rehearsing in one area and the snares and bass drum players in another.

## Friends help out at rural road wreck

By Steve Haynes  
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Wheat harvest took a wrong turn for the Marcuson family south of Oberlin on Saturday, but as it turned out, a lot of friends were there to help them when they needed it.

The family was ready to start harvest that morning. Brad Marcuson drove the combine to the field, about five miles south of the family's home place on U.S. 83 and about 15 1/2 miles south of Oberlin.

Because Brad's father, Gail, had heart surgery in Denver a couple of weeks ago, they were

shorthanded. Daughter Sarah was drafted to drive a tractor pulling a grain cart, used to unload wheat from the combine and haul it to a truck at the edge of the field. Elaine Marcuson followed in the family's beat-up 1989 Ford pickup.

Brad said he looked back up the open highway and told Sarah on the radio there was a pickup coming, but it was OK to turn. She wasn't sure how to downshift, however, and the tractor stalled on a slight rise. That left her mom no place to go.

Sarah, who said she was not familiar with the tractor, said she saw the pickup coming fast,

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## Briefly

**Music festival begins tonight**  
Colby's annual bluegrass festival, Pickin' on the Plains, begins tonight with a kick-off potluck and jam session at 6:30 p.m. at the 4-H building on the Thomas County Fairgrounds. The bands will start playing at 6 p.m. Friday, 12:35 p.m. Saturday and 11:10 a.m. Sunday at the fairgrounds. For information, call the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643.

**Family to talk about Africa trip**  
The First Presbyterian Church in Colby plans a potluck reception and presentation by Tim, Rebekah, Andrew and Lydia Peterson about their trip to Tanzania at 4 p.m. Sunday at the church. The Petersons also will talk about the history of Christian missions in Tanzania. For information, call the Rev. George T. Rahn at (785) 443-2632.

**Hospital plan diabetes class**  
Citizens Medical Center will hold a free "Journey for Control" class for people with diabetes from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the hospital. The class will use a "conversation map" to encourage people to be engaged in managing diabetes. Class size is limited, so register now. For information or to register, call Jeanene Brown at (785) 460-4850.

season will start in September. The organization will have early registration from 5 to 7:30 p.m. next Thursday at the Pioneer Memorial Library. Registration is \$45 until Saturday, July 31, and \$50 after. For information, call Emily Griffin at 460-0647.

**Volunteers needed for carnival**  
The Thomas County Amusement Association is looking for volunteers for the home-owned carnival at the Thomas County Free Fair from Tuesday to Saturday, July 27 to 31. Shifts are from 6:45 to 9 p.m. and 9 to 11 p.m. Volunteers are needed for the prize booth, ring toss, baseball throw and ball of chance. For information or to volunteer, call Holly Whitaker at the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401 or Angie Gaede at 443-3853.

**Commodities available Monday**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities will be distributed from 1 to 2 p.m. Monday at the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office in the Senior Progress Center. Anyone who's eligible may come and get food first-come, first-served. Commodities include instant milk, apricots, beans, apple juice, potato flakes, cream of mushroom soup, beef stew and carrots. For information, call the volunteer program office at 462-6744.

**Picnic, music again Wednesday**  
Colby's Picnic in the Park lunch-and-concert series continues at noon Wednesday at Fike Park with entertainment Lucas Baumfalk and friends. For information, call the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401 or the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643.

**Leadership group class open**  
Applications are available for the Leadership Thomas County program, set for four Wednesdays in September and October. Participants will learn 21st century leadership skills and an increased awareness of the county and state. The application deadline is Friday, July 23. For information or an application, stop by the Colby Chamber of Commerce office or call Leilani Thomas at 460-7643.

**Sign up for soccer this month**  
The American Youth Soccer Organization fall

