



## Colby schools get accredited for another year

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The Colby School District has been officially accredited by the Kansas Department of Education.

The department accredits each school building each year. To be accredited, the district has to fulfill several criteria, including having a school improvement plan, tests that conform to state standards and almost all teachers certified in their subjects.

Curriculum Director Diana Wieland said almost all teachers in the district are licensed in the subjects they're teaching, and she hopes to have all of them licensed this year.

"We've had people step up to the plate," she said.

The district also has two teachers who are completing the Transition to Teaching program through Fort Hays State University and will be licensed once they do.

The state also looks at test scores in certain grades and subjects, but unlike adequate yearly progress, the goals do not increase over time.

Based on these criteria, the state classifies districts in one of four categories: accredited, accredited on improvement, conditional accredited and not accredited. Wieland said the district met all the requirements and is classified as accredited.

If a school falls into one of the other categories, the department will place them on watch and will

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VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

## Candidate says finish line in sight

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With one week left in the 2010 general election, Republican attorney general candidate Derek Schmidt says he can see the finish line.

Schmidt came to town with Republican gubernatorial candidate Sam Brownback in August with his Road Map for Kansas Tour and again two weeks ago for the 125th Anniversary Celebration. Schmidt said he enjoyed the celebration.

Schmidt is a native of Independence. He attended the University of Kansas and Georgetown Law School. He served as the assistant attorney general under Gov. Bill

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Graves before being elected to the state senate. He is currently the senate majority leader and works as an attorney for independence.

He said he hopes to be out to western Kansas before Nov. 2, but isn't sure where or when.

Schmidt said he has personally been to all 105 counties. He said when he talks to citizens around the state, he hears a lot of concern

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## Town gets fancy for Sacred Heart

The City Limits Convention Center took on a Hollywood atmosphere Saturday night when 285 guests attended the Sacred Heart Parish annual dinner and fund raiser auction. Diners at the VIP table (above), complete with the butler service of Scott Gawith, enjoyed a few extras with their meal. Guest Gary Wingard (right) entered the banquet room via the red carpet. Auction items ranged from designer purses, to a handmade child-size table and chairs to a Las Vegas trip for two, with many items in between.



## Business is booming for trailer manufacturer

By Vera Sloan  
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The switch from a future in diesel mechanics to manufacturer suits Brad Skolout of Levant just fine. From his manufacturing facilities alongside U.S. Highway 24 on the west side of Levant, you'd never guess the business turns out five trailers a day. There's a reason for having only a couple or three trailers on the lot at one time - they are being sold before they have a chance to accumulate.

Skolout, who grew up on his parent's farm north of Levant, graduated from Colby High School in 1997. He graduated from the Northwest Vocational and Technical College in Goodland the same year with a certificate in diesel mechanics. However, he was drawn to



Brad Skolout

design engineering, so he headed to Kansas State University to the school of engineering.

In 1999 he married his high school sweetheart, Marie Pabst. Her dad, David Pabst was in the tree business and needed the expertise of young Skolout to help to build a better trailer.

Pabst had found a trailer in Arkansas to haul his tree spade on, but the specifications didn't quite suit his needs, so he made changes to it and built six trailers that would conform to exactly what he needed. However, he was so busy with the tree business, he turned the trailer building over to the new son-in-law.

Like most every other farm boy, Skolout knew how to weld, had a natural instinct for design and possessed a fierce work ethic. So he began building "pod" trailers

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## Michigan State University looking to save plains aquifer

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) - An underground water stock nearly equal to two of the Great Lakes doesn't guarantee America's High Plains will be able to fulfill the heavy demand of the region's agriculture.

Despite its vast holdings, the Ogallala Aquifer - which includes Thomas County - is losing water, and Michigan State University scientists are looking for ways to halt that shrinkage and secure a future supply for the region's farmers.

The vast underground water system lies under 111 million acres stretching as far north as South Dakota and as far south as Texas, and covers parts of Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

Researchers say the Ogallala Aquifer is one of the world's largest aquifer systems, storing almost

as much water as Lake Erie and Lake Huron together.

A \$1.2 million, four-year National Science Foundation grant to Michigan State scientists aims to help plan for improved management of the Ogallala Aquifer. Michigan State hydrogeologist David Hyndman will lead the multidisciplinary team of researchers, and the Kansas Geological Survey will participate as well.

"For more than 80 years, the Ogallala Aquifer has been used for irrigation, and the withdrawals far exceed its ability to replenish itself," Hyndman said. "We are on an unsustainable course and must make difficult changes if we are to keep using some of the best agricultural land in the country."

According to the U.S. Geological Service, water levels in 1980 in parts of Texas, Oklahoma and

Kansas had declined more than 100 feet from the 1930s.

In 2009, drought conditions led farmers to rely more on irrigation wells and a drop averaging 1.5 feet in the area within High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1, officials said.

"Researchers ... will study the interactions between the region's landscape, atmosphere and socio-economic systems," Michigan State spokesman Layne Cameron said in a posting on the school's website.

They hope to produce forecasts and projections based on a variety of potential solutions to the shrinking water source, the university said. That information should help people adjust land management policies and establish sustainable water-use practices, it said.

### Briefly

#### Heartland fall festival is Sunday

Heartland Christian School will hold a fall festival from 4 to 8 p.m. on Sunday at the school. There will be games from 4 to 7 p.m., a soup supper from 4 to 6:30 p.m. and a volleyball scrimmage from 7 to 8 p.m. Donations will be accepted and kids are welcome to come in costume. For information, call the school at 460-6419.

#### Games and treats this Sunday

The Colby Church of Christ will hold a "Trunk and Treat" party from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Sunday in the church parking lot. There will be games, prizes and treats. For information, call Tammy Goldsworth at 460-2484.

#### Group plans Halloween party

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Thomas County

#### Women's group to sell greenery

The Colby Presbyterian Women are selling fresh Christmas greenery to raise money for mission projects. Items include wreaths, swags, garlands, holly, table decorations and more. Order by Sunday for delivery the first week of December. Call the church at 462-6342, Mary Smith at 462-3387 or JoAnne Sunderman at 460-2476.

#### Genesis needs names for baskets

Genesis-Thomas County food bank plans once

#### Red Cross to collect blood twice

The American Red Cross will have two blood drives from noon to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 3, at the Colby Community Building and 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 4, in the student union at Colby Community College. Schedule an appointment online at redcrossblood.org or call Trudy Wildeman in the college Health Science Building at (785) 460-4797. Walk-ins are welcome.

#### Massage class needs clients

The Therapeutic Massage Program at Colby Com-

munity College is offering massages by students in the Massage Clinic I class from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesdays. For an appointment, call (785) 460-5427. The fee is \$5. Any gratuities will be put into the Massage Therapy Club fund to help students pay for the National Certification Exam for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork, said Debra A. Waites, director of the program.

