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Black Friday a success for area merchants

By Vera Sloan

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Colby merchants say they were happy with the number of shoppers and their eagerness to buy on this year's Black Friday, the traditional opening of the Christmas shopping season right after Thanksgiving.

A random sampling of Colby retailers showed good traffic in and out the Friday after Thanksgiving, traditionally one of the biggest days of the year, and a day when stores put on big sales.

The manager at Maurice's Women's Apparel Retail said shoppers and sales people had a good time over the weekend, with many shoppers apparently deciding to buy at home.

She said they also had their share of out-of-town shoppers who were excited

to pick up some early bargains for gifts.

"The store is putting together some pretty exciting sales for December," said Kristi Holtz, store manager. "We'll be having the usual 'buy one, get one' this month, and this Thursday, with each sweater purchase, the buyer gets 20 percent off. It looks like this year's sales will be even bigger than last year."

Colby Implement will have its version of a Black Friday sale from 4 to 8 p.m.

this Wednesday.

"We'll be having 'ladies night,'" said Jennifer Thompson, sales controller, "with 20 percent off toys, clothing and some select items, plus there will be door prizes, soup, cider and snacks, for shoppers."

Jeff Horlacher of Horlacher Jewelers said the store had good traffic on Friday, with several customers from out of town looking for gifts. He said sales went well

and he was pleased. He said he anticipates an excellent season, and noted that early shoppers "seemed to have the Christmas spirit."

Amy's Fashions also reported a good day on Friday. Loretta Weeks, sales assistant, said the store was consistently busy all day, with some of the biggest sales going to out-of-town shoppers.

County discusses siren changes

By Vera Sloan

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Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan introduced her new administrative assistant, Autumn Arasmith, to the Thomas County commissioners on Monday, saying she will assume duties as assistant director.

McMahan brought bids on changing radio gear at the seven emergency sirens in Colby to narrow-band requirements. She said the temporary fix requires a "radio brain change" inside box on the poles that hold each siren. The changes, required by federal laws, will allow the sirens to be used until the federal government brings out new requirements for emergency sirens in 2013, she said.

A bid from Prairie States Communications out of Imperial, Neb., was approved for \$1,076 for all seven sirens.

The commission named Chairman Ken Christiansen to represent elected officials on the county's Local Emergency Planning Committee, required by federal regulations. He replaces Commissioner Byron Sowers. McMahan said the government recommends that additional people from the agricultural sector be named to serve on the committee, which plans emer-



Anemic first snow hits Thomas County

It may not have amounted to much, but Colby had its first real snowfall of winter today. The snow was enough to stick to roads and grass (right) as well as windshields (above). It stopped falling by noon, and what was left on the ground melted quickly. The National Weather Service is predicting a couple of cold and windy days, but no more snow.

KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press



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Transportation officials say department ready for winter

WICHITA (AP) — Kansas transportation officials say the state is better prepared to deal with harsh winter weather than it was a year ago, but road crews still could be stretched thin in some areas.

The *Wichita Eagle* reports that an increased demand for salt, a shortage of workers and high diesel prices forced the state to do the bare minimum in cleaning icy and snowy roads last year.

But Kansas Department of Transportation spokesman Tom Hein said given the budget crunch the state has been facing the past couple of years, transportation crews are as ready as they can be for winter.

"We are not going to be able to do it as comprehensively as we used to," Hein said. "It will require a wise use of the resources. But we're not going to be out there as bare-bones as we were

last year."

This season, storage bins are full of salt and sand and the trucks have been prepared for duty. That's good news for travelers, although Hein acknowledges there still could be a shortage of drivers.

"We certainly don't have full crews on deck for winter this year," he said. "We've got 24 trucks in the (Wichita) metro area, and that means we may not have a person in every truck. There may be trucks sitting idle because we simply don't have enough people."

Maintenance crews were treating highways and streets with brine in case wintery weather moves in during weekends, Hein said. On weekday mornings, crews dubbed the "frost patrol" check elevated surfaces and spray brine if there's a danger of the roads icing over.

Sweep may not be so clean for Kansas Republican Party

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Gov.-elect Sam Brownback's inauguration will make Jan. 10 a heady moment for fellow Kansas Republicans, but also a politically dangerous one.

Brownback's victory in this year's election was part of the GOP's first sweep of statewide and congressional offices on the ballot since 1964. Republicans have huge majorities in the Legislature and will hold more state House seats than they have since 1954.

But the Republican "clean sweep" and the GOP's legislative dominance have sown the seeds

of future problems for Brownback and the party. Expectations are high among GOP legislators who want to push anti-abortion proposals and legislation on social issues, but other Republicans want Brownback to stick to creating private-sector jobs and controlling government spending.

Many Republicans anticipate that tensions will rise between House leaders and their less-conservative Senate counterparts. They're expecting bills that deal with abortion, embryonic stem cell research, gun rights and other social issues to fly through the House and stall in the Senate.

The tensions could lead to spirited GOP legislative primaries in

2012 — and the kind of GOP infighting Democrats need to eventually emerge from their shellacking this year.

"This election was not about social issues. It was about economic issues," said Andy Wollen, a Lenexa marketing consultant who's chairman of the moderate Kansas Traditional Republican Majority. "If Republicans dash down the path of social issues — making our culture more conservative — then they're heading in the wrong direction."

But no matter what issues come to the fore in a given election year, abortion foes, religious conserva-

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Briefly

Courthouse to close for funeral

The Thomas County commissioners agreed to close county offices from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday so employees can attend state Rep. Jim Morrison's funeral at 10:30 a.m. at the Colby United Methodist Church. The commission will meet at 1 p.m. instead of 9 a.m. For information, call County Clerk Shelly Harms at 460-4500.

Chamber After 5 at distributor

The Colby-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce will hold a ribbon cutting and Business after 5 reception at Pestinger Beverage, a Budweiser distributor, at 5 p.m. Wednesday at the firm's new Colby warehouse, 2106 U.S. 24 east of town. For information, call the Chamber at 460-3401.

Brunch to support league projects

The Colby Women's League will hold a Christmas

brunch from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday at the Meadow Lake Golf Course clubhouse. There will be a raffle for a handmade quilt by Anita Hills. Tickets can be purchased from any member for \$1 each or \$5 for six. All proceeds go to league projects. For information, call Sydney Strait at (785) 460-7665, or Hills at (785) 462-6208.

Scripture sessions set for shop

The Thomas County Ministerial Association plans to hold its December Soup and Scripture sessions from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesdays at Smoffee's in downtown Colby instead of at a church. Owner Shawn Larson will have a soup lunch for \$5. The theme is "Characters at the Stable." Call Pastor Carol Rahn at 443-2636 for information.

Lions cooking flapjacks, sausage

The High Plains Lions Club will hold its annual

pancake-and-sausage feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building. For information, call Virgil Jones at 462-1106.

Kids can shop for mom and dad

The Thomas County Community Foundation will sponsor Santa's Workshop from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday at the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave. The event gives children in preschool to fourth grade an opportunity to buy Christmas gifts for moms, dads, guardians or grandparents for \$4 each. Each child may buy up to four gifts. Proceeds will be used for foundation grants. For information, call the office at 460-9152.

Selden school plans soup supper

Golden Plains Elementary School in Selden will have a soup supper from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 7, at the Sacred Heart Parish Hall on Main

Street. The menu includes homemade chicken-noodle soup, chili and desserts. Proceeds will go to the playground and the OWLS project. For information, call Judy Rogers at (785) 386-4582.

First graders plan music program

Colby Grade School first graders will present a free holiday program, "Christmas Around the Clock," at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 9, at the grade school auditorium. For information, call music teacher Jennifer Koel at the school, (785) 460-5100, extension 1104.

