



COLBY FREE PRESS

Wednesday

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Mixing modern and classic



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Colby Middle School sixth graders sang several modern Christmas arrangements – which mixed in traditional carols – at the Colby Middle and High School choir and band concert Tuesday night.

Distemper forces state to take dogs

By Kimberly Davis
The Oberlin Herald
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Over 1,000 dogs were signed over to a state agency after a fight against the often-lethal virus canine distemper in a Decatur County dog kennel. The dogs all apparently were put down and buried near the Nebraska state line.

The application to dispose of the canine carcasses was filled out by Jeff Fortin, owner of Beaver Creek Kennels near Cedar Bluffs.

A statement issued just before lunch today from the Kansas Animal Health Department states that the facility had been under quarantine twice since the middle of October. Throughout that time, the agency said, repeated tests showed distemper in dogs in the kennel.

According to healthcommunities.com, “Canine distemper is a contagious, incurable, often fa-

tal, multisystemic viral disease that affects the respiratory, gastrointestinal and central nervous systems. Distemper is caused by canine distemper virus.”

The animal health department, which regulates and licenses kennels in the state, said that with the puppies under quarantine, the kennel owner had no income flow, which meant not being able to maintain the work force, and had difficulty in keeping proper sanitation and being able to keep the animals fed and watered.

“It was apparent the owner could not survive financially under these conditions, nor did he want to chance spreading disease any further outside his facility,” the release said.

All the factors lead to removing the dogs from the facility and quarantine continuing on the empty kennel to allow for a cleanup period.

“The department had to balance

its dual responsibilities of maintaining the welfare of the dogs with preventing the disease from spreading outside of the kennel,” said Dr. Bill Brown, a veterinarian and state livestock commissioner, head of the department. “Decisions were made only after extensive discussions with numerous veterinarians familiar with distemper in breeding kennels.”

“This difficult decision was the last choice of the department and the breeder, but in the end all believed it was the only humane way to accomplish both objectives: to prevent the spread of the disease and protect the dogs from prolonged suffering.”

Mr. Fortin returned calls from *The Oberlin Herald* today, but said he didn’t want an interview until after talking with his lawyer and the state.

Last Wednesday, the day after

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Kansas judge commission opens up selection process

By John Hanna
The Associated Press

TOPEKA – The commission that screens applications for the Kansas Supreme Court and state Court of Appeals announced Friday that it is abandoning a long-standing practice of having private interviews with judicial candidates in hopes of boosting public confidence in the selection process.

The Supreme Court Nominating Commission’s decision to open the interviews to the public comes after an unsuccessful attempt to remove four Supreme Court justices

in this year’s election and amid criticism that the selection process is too dominated by lawyers and lacks sufficient transparency.

With Court of Appeals Judge Nancy Caplinger’s recent promotion to the state Supreme Court, the public will get a quick look at the commission’s new public interview process. Caplinger’s potential successors are expected to be interviewed by the panel Thursday and Friday.

“The decision to open the interviews recognizes that a more transparent process of appellate judicial selection is important,”

commission Chairwoman Anne Burke, an Overland Park lawyer, said in a statement.

The commission picks up to three finalists for each appellate court vacancy and submits their names to the governor, who makes the appointment. Voters decide every six years for Supreme Court justices and every four years for Court of Appeals judges whether an appointee stays on the bench.

There’s no confirmation of appellate court appointees by the Kansas Senate, as happens with

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Air Force flier honors mechanics who worked hard to fix motor home

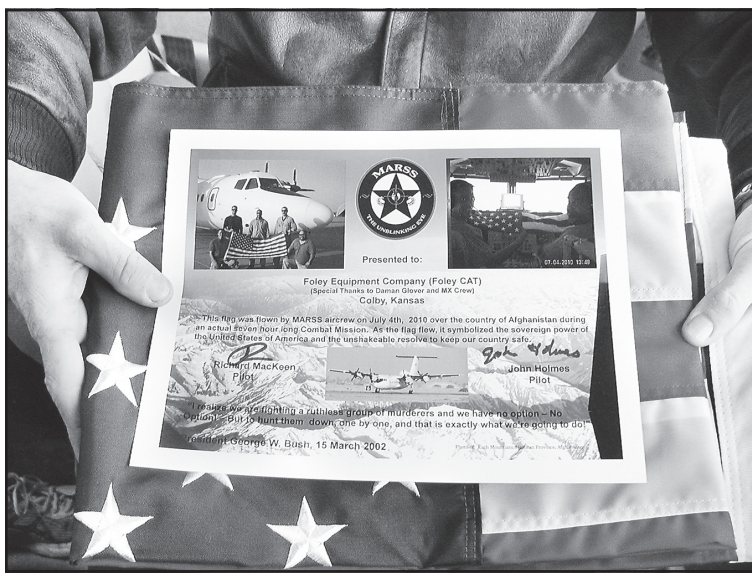
By Vera Sloan
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If you’re driving a motor home on your way home from Colorado Springs to Millstadt, Ill., you have good reason to be in a hurry, and if you break down, then Colby is probably the place to be.

At least the Richard MacKeen family thinks so. MacKeen, his wife Mary and four of their five children, Jarod, 9; Kaity, 10; Heather, 12; Chris, 14; and Nikki, 16, spent the most part of three days in Colby. Their fifth child, Josh, 18, stayed behind in Colorado Springs to attend a Christian camp.

It all began last Memorial Day weekend. The MacKeen family had been to the Air Force Academy for graduation, and was in a hurry to get home so he could return to duty in Afghanistan.

MacKeen, retired after 20 years as an Air Force pilot, contracts with the military to fly missions



over Afghanistan. Being on time for his deployment was a priority.

“When a motor home breaks down, it is sort of a nightmare for mechanics,” MacKeen said, “and ours was a good one.”

The fan hub bearing went out in Burlington on Friday, he said, so the family had to have the vehicle

towed the 60-plus miles to Foley Equipment Co. in Colby, the nearest Caterpillar shop.

“When the engine is under warranty,” he said, “the company will authorize only so many man hours to fix it.”

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VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

An American flag flown during a seven-hour combat mission in Afghanistan in July was presented to Foley Equipment manger Daman Glover (center) and mechanic Jose Oliver on Saturday. Foley and Oliver were cited for going above and beyond ordinary service to get the Richard MacKeen family back on the road over Memorial Day weekend. MacKeen, a retired Air Force pilot, flies contract missions for the Air Force.

Briefly

Boosters plan potato bar at game

The Colby Sports Booster Club will have a potato bar from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday during the high school boys basketball game against Hugoton at the Colby Community Building. The club also will have a soup supper at the Scott City game on Tuesday, Jan. 11. Proceeds will go to help build a new locker room for visiting teams at Dennen Field. For information, call Gary Adrian at 460-2931.

School plans Christmas show

Sacred Heart Catholic School will put on a program of Christmas music at 7 p.m. Monday in the school gym, featuring second through fifth graders. For information, call the school at 460-2813.

Trash crews to take ‘eves’ off

The Colby Sanitation Department will not pick up

residential trash on Christmas Eve, Friday, Dec. 24, and New Year’s Eve, Friday, Dec. 31. Routes will be picked up the day before both weeks. Have your tipper cans to the curb by 8 a.m. The department will not pick up commercial trash Friday and Saturday, Dec. 24 and 25, and Friday and Saturday, Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. For information, call the Public Works office at 460-4420.

Courthouse elevator needs work

The elevator at the Thomas County Courthouse will be out of service Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 28 and 29, so a new motor starter can be installed. For information, call County Clerk Shelly Harms at 460-4500.

Hill City artist featured at museum

Works by Hill City artist and teacher David Chal-

fant are on exhibit at the Prairie Museum of Art and History through the end of December. His sculptures and paintings have been shown in regional and national shows. For information, contact the museum at 460-4590 or museumed@st-tel.net.

Youth league to meet next month

A parent-player meeting for Youth League Basketball will begin at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 5, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Coach Matt Ludwig said the cost is \$20 per player, and games will start the following weekend. For information, call the church at 462-2761.

College pool open weekdays

The Colby Community College indoor swimming pool is open for lap swimming from 5 to 7 a.m. Monday to Friday and 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday,

Wednesday and Thursday; from 5 to 9 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday; and from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday and Friday. Open swim is from 4 to 7 p.m. Monday and Thursday; 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday; and 1 to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. General admission is \$3, but monthly and yearly passes are available. Call manager Kipp Nelson at 460-5476.

Discuss Fort Riley at lunch

Sandra Reddish will speak about the history of Fort Riley at the last Food for Thought of the year at noon Thursday at the Prairie Museum. For information, call the museum at 460-4590.

