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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Ron and Linda Vrbas (right house) and their neighbor Brent Menges (left house) on Cherokee Drive tied for first place in the motion-display category of the Colby Christmas Light Contest. The displays included moving parts, such as a small helicopter. Promotion Committee member Jeff Horlacher said the category was new this year.

Winners picked in lighting contest

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

First place in the residential category of the Colby Promotion Committee's 2010 Christmas Light Contest went to Debbie Applebaugh with a big, glowing display at 885 Cherokee Dr. on the east side of town.

Applebaugh said she puts up lights every year. This year she added penguins in a hot air balloon and Rudolph.

"Going around looking at lights is a part of Christmas," she said. "I just wanted my display to be joyful and reflect the Christmas spirit."

Jeff Horlacher, a promotion committee member who drove the judges around, said Applebaugh told him she had to add new sockets for all the lights and was still blowing circuit breakers.

Applebaugh said she was surprised to hear she'd been entered in the contest, but she's gotten many comments on how good her display is. One elder-

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Dinah Charles' light display at 745 W. Cherry St. won second place in the residential category of the Colby Promotion Committee's annual lighting contest. The display also includes lights along a fence facing Range Avenue which spell out "Merry Christmas."

Colby Rotary Club gives out coats to area children

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press
aheintz@nwkansas.com

The Colby Rotary Club collected money and clothing for Colby Grade School students this holiday season.

Kris Cameron, co-chair with Marilyn Unger on the annual "Coats for Kids Project," said Rotary members donated about \$1,100 for the project. Cameron said some kids needed coats, while oth-

ers needed clothes like jeans, snow boots, hats, gloves and mittens. She said the staff at the Citizens Medical Center provided 27 hats and scarves.

Cameron said the school provides Rotary with information on the size and gender of children who need clothes and on what each child's needs are. The names are kept private, she said.

Five residents at the Prairie Senior Living Complex helped wrap the gifts and the club delivered them to the kids on

Monday at the grade school. Cameron said Courtney McCarty, dietitian at Citizen's Medical Center, helped organize the resident's role in the project. She said Mickey Miller, activities director at the Senior Living Complex, helped McCarty with the task.

Cameron said the club also received a \$1,000 grant from Walmart. It didn't use the money this year, but the organization will be using it next year when they try to extend the project to Golden Plains and

Brewster Grade schools.

Sunflower Bank delivered boxes of food to kids at the grade school, Genesis-Thomas County food bank and Trinity Lutheran Church.

Branch President Jim Stanley said the bank donated five boxes to the grade school, two to Genesis and one to Trinity Lutheran Church for a needy family.

Stanley said the bank began collecting food in January. He said employees brought in different types of food, maybe

some cereal or a can of soup, every Friday. Stanley said he and his employees saw the food drive as a way of doing something for the community, adding that he was really proud of how his employees had taken on the project.

"They did a great job," Stanley said. "Even though we gave it away, we know it's the right thing to do."

"The first person served when giving service is the server."

Dressing down for charity



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby High School students (from left) Alexa Schindler, Jessi Kriss and Gabby Browne donned their pajamas Tuesday for Pajama Day. The Young Humanitarians raised \$500 for Covenant House, a national nonprofit agency in, that provides shelter for homeless children. Students either wore pajamas or were asked to donate \$2 to the charity.

Board of regents holds fast to increased budget proposal

TOPEKA (AP) — Higher education officials in Kansas aren't backing away from their proposal to boost spending on state universities and colleges by \$50 million, despite opposition from Gov.-elect Sam Brownback.

Brownback, a Republican who takes office Jan. 10, told the *Lawrence Journal-World* that because of the state's budget problems, it doesn't have the money to execute the "Kansas Commitment" plan from the state Board of Regents. The plan would increase state spending on the higher education system by about 7 percent for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

The incoming governor's comments Tuesday received an immediate response from regents Chairman Gary Sherrer, who said, "The board's position has not changed."

"Because higher education is an economic engine, we'll continue

to make the case to policy makers that higher education should be a greater priority," Sherrer, a former Republican lieutenant governor, said in a statement.

Brownback is promising to keep the state budget balanced without increasing taxes. Legislative researchers have projected that the gap between projected revenues and existing spending commitments already approaches \$500 million.

The governor-elect told the *Journal-World* that he favors shifting resources within higher education to increase the budget for programs and institutions directly linked to the economy. He named the University of Kansas Medical Center as an example.

Brownback said some states are discontinuing degree programs that are graduating small numbers of students and that perhaps Kansas should follow their example.

But Sherrer said he believes the state can find the money for the regents' proposal.

"The board has identified the resources needed to protect the state's higher education infrastructure, keep college affordable, and boost the state's economy," Sherrer said.

The state expects to spend about \$751 million tax dollars on higher education under the current budget, about \$100 million less than was allocated before the state started making budget cuts in 2009 because of the Great Recession.

The regents' plan for the next fiscal year would offset some of those cuts and the expected loss of federal economic stimulus dollars. But the plan also would direct \$14 million in state dollars toward high-demand academic programs, with training more engineers as one goal.

Briefly

Trash crews to take Friday off

The Colby Sanitation Department will not pick up residential trash on New Year's Eve. Routes will be picked up on Thursday. Have your tipper cans to the curb by 8 a.m. The department will not pick up commercial trash Friday or Saturday. For information, call the Colby Public Works office at 460-4420.

Landfill to close for the holidays

The Thomas County Landfill will close Friday and Saturday for the New Year's holiday but be open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. It will close again next Monday. For information, call 462-8139.

Smart Start looking for kids

Smart Start, a tuition-free preschool, is accept-

ing applications for its 2011-2012 school year. The school accepts applications all year long for kids aged 3 and 4. For information, or to get an application, call 460-6067.

Courthouse elevator needs repair

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

Courts to close early for holiday

The Thomas County District Court office will close at noon Friday so the staff can complete end-of-the-year accounting. The office will open again on Tuesday, Jan. 4. For information, call 460-4540.

Hill City artist featured at museum

Works by Hill City artist and teacher David Chalfant are on exhibit at the Prairie Museum of Art and History through the end of the week. 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 will be open for lap swimming from 5 to 7 a.m. and from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. this week. Director Kip Nelson said the pool will be closed Friday and remain closed until Tuesday, Jan. 11, due to a lack of life guards. He suggested checking the website www.colbycc.edu to see if the schedule has changed, or calling (785) 460-5476.



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