



10 pages

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VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

These little wheat seedlings have struggled to stay alive through a harsh and dry winter. Many barely sprouted. Normally one kernel of wheat would "stool" out, have many leaves and be at least four inches tall. Without moisture, it's likely wheat fields in this condition won't have the push they need to make a crop this year.

## Wheat crop suffering in dry year

By Vera Sloan  
Colby Free Press  
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Just how serious is the drought? The answer is easy when wheat that's been in the ground since September has barely sprouted.

Dale Hershberger of ZEZ Commodities said he spent a little time on Monday counting how many plants to a square yard he had in a field in Logan County. He was trying to determine how much liquid nitrogen he would need to top dress the crop.

"That last six inches of snow had about 30 points of moisture," Hershberger said, but hardly enough to make it viable to spread fertilizer on a crop that looks like it won't make it without a good dose of moisture."

Hershberger had a few pea seeds lying on the counter next to the wheat seedlings. He said he would have used the peas as an experi-

mental crop replacing the wheat if the window of time for planting peas here was bigger.

"There's going to be a lot of experimental crops planted in the future," he said, "but there is only about a two-week window left for peas."

Pea seed is expensive and not readily available here, he said. Peas are used as a forage crop for cattle and for a cover crop to replace soil nutrients because of their naturally high nitrogen content. Peas and other legumes are part of a process known as nitrogen fixation, by which nitrogen in the atmosphere is converted into ammonia in the soil.

"For anyone wanting to tear up a poor stand of wheat, they have to remember to go to the Farm Services office first," Hershberger said, "(and wait) until insurance has had time to adjust it and they can be certified to plant a different crop."

## College candidate says quality, integrity lacking

By Vera Sloan  
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Nick Wells – a graduate, former teacher and long-time booster – says running for a seat on the Colby Community College board has been in the back of his mind for quite a while.

A native of Liberal, Wells graduated from the college in 1975. He returned to be on faculty as animal science instructor and livestock judging coach from 1978 to 1996. His teams brought three national titles back to Colby and ranked in the top three nationally during those years.

"I actually bleed blue," Wells said, "and there was never a day from 1996 to 2003 that I didn't wish I was back at Colby Community College."

During the interim, he was a faculty member at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, but he returned to Colby in 2003 to become the college's endowment director.

See "CANDIDATE," Page 3



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Colby Community College board candidate Nick Wells at his desk at the college's endowment office. Wells is endowment director for the college foundation.

## Legislature to negotiate on special-education spending

By John Hanna  
AP Political Writer

TOPEKA – Kansas legislators are considering a new proposal to satisfy the federal government's demands that the state boost spending on special-education programs in public schools without undercutting Gov. Sam Brownback's effort to trim the current state budget.

House and Senate negotiators planned to consider the proposal

Wednesday, a day after reopening talks on a bill sought by Brownback to revise the current budget. The negotiations stalled last week, and the key disagreement was about special education money.

State officials said the U.S. Department of Education has warned Kansas that federal law requires the state to increase its special education budget by more than \$26 million. Otherwise, the state faces the loss of the same amount of federal money every year.

Senators voted to add money to the current budget to cover the cost, but that action went against Brownback's efforts to reduce overall spending. The House had sided with Brownback.

During Tuesday's brief talks, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Mark Rhoades outlined a plan to cover the special education costs by diverting funds from the state's base aid to its 289 school

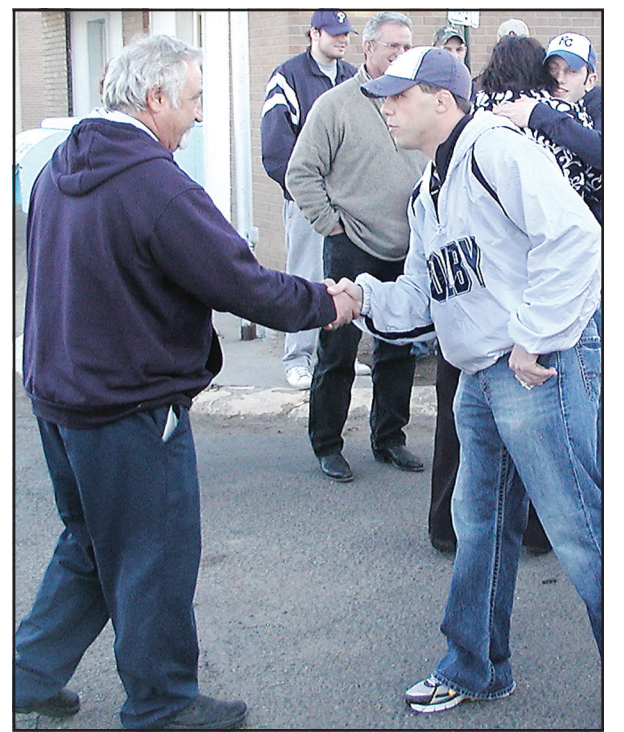
See "BUDGET," Page 3



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

## Wrestlers get sendoff

The Colby Community College pep band (above) played for the wrestling team at a send-off Tuesday. Coach David Nordhues (right) and his team got handshakes and waves from faculty, staff and fans as they boarded the bus for the national championships in Spokane, Wash. Eight Colby wrestlers qualified for nationals.



## Briefly

### Congressman in Oakley Thursday

Congressman Tim Huelskamp will be at the Oakley Town Hall from 1 to 2 p.m. Thursday for a "Town Hall" meeting, part of the new representative's continuing tour of the 69-county 1st District. For information, call (202) 225-2715.

### Animal Clinic has stray dog

Colby Animal Clinic has a stray 7-month-old neutered male Lhasa Apso looking for its owner. Lost or strayed animals are often brought to the clinic. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.

### Get a wellness check at Smoffee's

Thomas County emergency medical technician students will be performing wellness checks from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday at Smoffee's coffee shop down-

town. Checks include blood pressure and blood sugar. For information, call Dawnelle Umberger at 460-4585.

### Apply now for foundation grant

The Thomas County Community Foundation is accepting applications for the "Kids Can Do!" The grants provide \$200 for nonprofit organizations or classrooms. Applications are due by Tuesday. For information, go to [www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com](http://www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com) or call 460-9152.

### Learn to save a life in March

Thomas County Emergency Medical Service will have a cardiopulmonary resuscitation information meeting for the public from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday at Smoffee's coffee shop. It costs \$20 to be certified in the technique, but anyone can attend the meeting. For information, call Dawnelle Um-

berger at 460-4585.

### Prayer day lunch next week

Church Women United will sponsor a World Day of Prayer luncheon and worship service for area women at noon Friday, March 4, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Women from several Colby churches will present a program prepared by the women of Chile called "How Many Loaves Have You?" Donations will be accepted. For information, call Millie Horlacher at 462-3104.

### Storm spotter class here March 7

The National Weather Service will offer its annual Storm Spotter Class at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 7, downstairs at the Community Building. For information, call the Goodland weather office at (785) 899-7119.

### Kids to do musical at school

Second graders from Colby Grade School will present, "From the Inside Out: A Musical Celebrating Positive Character," at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 8, at the grade school auditorium. For information call Jennifer Koel at 460-5100.

### Faculty plans candidate forum

The Colby Community College Faculty Alliance will hold a candidate forum for Board of Trustees candidates at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 29, in the Cultural Arts Center on campus. Questions for the candidates may be e-mailed to [bob.selby@colbycc.edu](mailto:bob.selby@colbycc.edu) or [deb.bickner@colbycc.edu](mailto:deb.bickner@colbycc.edu).



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