



10 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Friday

March 4, 2011

Volume 122, Number 36

Serving Thomas County since 1888

## Census says county dropped 280 people

The U.S. Census Bureau released the 2010 data for Kansas on Thursday, and while Thomas County lost 280 people, it fared better than its neighbors.

According to the 2010 Census, the county had 7,900 people living in it last year. Thomas County had 8,180 people in the 2000 census, making for a loss of 280 people over the last 10 years, or 3.4 percent.

With the exception of Ellis County, all of northwest Kansas lost population. Cheyenne County lost 14 percent; Decatur, 15 percent; Gove, 12 percent; Logan, 10 percent; Rawlins, 15 percent; Sheri-

dan, 9 percent; Sherman, 11 percent; and Wallace, 15 percent.

Very few counties posted gains. The population in Pottawatomie, Geary, Johnson and Miami counties increased by more than 15 percent.

The census data also includes township- and city-level population totals. Morgan Township, excluding Colby, has the highest population at 662 while Wendell Township — in the northeast corner of the county — has 57 people.

Colby has 5,387 people; Brewster, 305; Rexford, 232; Gem, 88; and Levant and Menlo, 61. There are 41 Oakley residents

on this side of the border.

Overall, the state increased population by 6 percent and had upswings in every demographic. The changing population density around the county did not, however, make Kansas lose one of its congressional seats.

Gov. Sam Brownback issued a statement on the census figures Thursday afternoon.

"It's always good to see growth but I'd like to see more balanced growth across more of the state," Governor Brownback said. "The census data shows the importance of creating Rural Opportunity

Zones. We need to incentivize population growth in Kansas communities that are losing population."

Brownback went on to tout his Rural Opportunity Zone proposal, which would provide a 5-year income tax credit to anyone from out of state who moves to a county that has declined by 10 percent or more. While Thomas County would not qualify for the program, many of the surrounding counties would.

Some cities aren't happy with their census findings. The Associated Press reported Thursday that Salina and Garden City may appeal their findings. Salina

grew by 4.4 percent to about 47,000, but City Manager Jason Gage said minorities and housing may have been counted incorrectly. The city had hoped to reach 50,000, a threshold at which they could qualify for several federal grants and programs. Garden City's 6 percent decline to 27,000 doesn't track with local officials, who say their population is more than 30,000.

Data for the majority of the states has been released, and all will be available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) by April 1.

## Potatoes with all the fixin's



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby Middle School Principal Rob Ross loaded up his baked potato at the Colby High Booster Club's potato bar fund raiser at the Class 4A substate basketball tournament Thursday. The

club is raising money to construct a new locker room for visiting teams at Dennen Field.

## Colby principal inducted into state hall of fame

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press  
aheintz@nwkans.com

Colby High principal and activities director Larry Gabel isn't comfortable being lavished with praise, so he was a little uneasy when he learned he would be inducted into the Kansas State High School Activities Association Hall of Fame last Saturday before the finals of the Class 3-2-1A state wrestling tournament in Hays.

It took his son Billy, coach of the Pine Creek High School wrestling team from Colorado, to convince him he wouldn't only be accepting the award for himself, he would also be accept-

ing it for the school, community and wrestlers he coached during his illustrious 32-year (1974-2005) career at St. Francis High School.

Gabel said he accepted the induction for his family, coaching staff and the kids who "worked their tails off" for him.

"The award is about everyone involved in the community," he said.

During his tenure at St. Francis, the wrestling program amassed an impressive number of accomplishments including six Class 3-2-1A state championships, 16 combined second- through sixth-place state



Larry Gabel

See "PRINCIPAL," Page 3

## Senate opposes arts restructuring

TOPEKA (AP) — The Kansas Senate will consider a bill that would block Gov. Sam Brownback's efforts to dissolve the Kansas Arts Commission.

The Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee on Thursday approved and sent to the Senate a measure that will block Brownback's plan to disband the commission. The Republican governor wants to transfer fundraising responsibilities for community arts to a private-sector nonprofit called the Kansas Arts Foundation.

At least six of nine committee members voted to support the resolution sponsored by Sen. Roger Reitz, R-Manhattan.

"It is critical that the Kansas Arts Commission remain a state agency and be funded at its current level," Reitz said. "This program has been working. Hold fast to that which is good."

Senate President Steve Mor-

ris, R-Hugoton, said a preliminary count showed that 21 senators — the minimum needed for approval — would approve the resolution, according to *The Topeka Capital-Journal*.

If either the full House or Senate approves the resolution, it would kill the reorganization plan.

The state spends about \$750,000 annually to secure National Endowment for the Arts matching grants for arts programs across the state.

Brownback has proposed eliminating the Kansas Arts Commission and transferring its functions to the Kansas Historical Society, which would receive \$200,000 in seed money to begin the process of breaking free of government subsidies.

The governor's plan includes formation of the Kansas Arts Foundation, which would have to raise private donations necessary to secure matching grants.

## City buys dishwasher for community building

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press  
aheintz@nwkans.com

The Colby City Council approved buying a dishwashing machine for the kitchen in the Community Building for \$3,249 at a meeting on Tuesday.

The council considered leasing a refurbished dishwashing machine for \$69 a month, but they opted to buy one instead because the machine is only used 10 or 12 times a year.

Stacy Lee, director of the Colby Recreation Department, said the dishwashing machine sometimes goes for months without being used. City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said

the machine they bought was new so they wouldn't have to pay much in the way of maintenance costs.

In other business, the council:

- Awarded a bid for a Grasshopper mower from Lang Diesel for \$12,152. The city needed a mower that would allow the staff to mow under the right-of-way fence along Range Avenue. The original bid from Lang Diesel was for \$13,640, but the council was able to get the price trimmed down because the city didn't need to buy the grass catcher that goes with the mower. The catcher the city currently has is interchangeable, Armstrong said.

The other bids the city received included \$13,665 from Colby Ag for a Woods mower

and \$14,249 from Beringer Hardware for a Snapper mower.

- Decided to approve an agreement to pay \$43,750 to Penco Engineering for Construction engineering services on the Kansas Department of Transportation resurfacing project on K-25 from north of College Drive to Fourth Street. Chris Bieker, city public works director, said city workers will mill and overlay this part of Range Ave. The department will cover 80 percent of the costs and the city 20 percent.

- Approved supplement that added \$15,000 extra for a contract the city had with Penco

See "CITY," Page 3

## Briefly

### Booster Club to serve potatoes

Due to another organization cancelling, the Colby High Booster Club will have another potato bar from 5 to 7 at the Class 4A substate tournament tonight at the Community Building. For information, call Gary Adrian at 460-2931.

### Ag department food available

The United States Department of Agriculture will distribute extra commodities from 1 to 2 p.m. Monday, March 14, at the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office in the Senior Progress Center. Commodities are given according to income guidelines and distribution is first-come, first-served. Participants are asked to not arrive before 12:30 p.m. Commodities include canned beef, tomato soup, green beans, mixed fruit, cherries and milk. For information, call the program office at 462-6744.

### Gem Lions plan soup luncheon

The Gem Lions Club will be serving homemade vegetable and potato soup, chili and cake for its annual Winter Soup Day from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday at the Gem Community Building. Donations will go for community projects. For information, call Ken Poland, 462-7809. The Lions will be collecting eye glasses and hearing aids to recycle.

There will be a Singles and Couples Dance from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday at the Meadow Lake Clubhouse. Gary Phipps will provide the music. For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 269-7057.

### Dance planned for Saturday

There will be a Singles and Couples Dance from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday at the Meadow Lake Clubhouse. Gary Phipps will provide the music. For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 269-7057.

### Food sign up open now

Prairie Land Food sign up is open until Monday at the State Farm Insurance Office, 905 E. Fourth St. Delivery will be 12:15 p.m. Saturday, March 19, at Sacred Heart School gym. For information, call Gene Griffon at 460-3579.

### Storm spotter class here Monday

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

### Spring concert is Monday

The Colby Middle and High School spring vocal concert will be at 7:30 p.m. Monday at the high school auditorium.

### 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 at the Colby Grade School Auditorium. For information call music teacher Jennifer Koel at 460-5100, extension 1104.

### Seniors plan potluck Tuesday

The group More Fun Together plans a potluck dinner for people 50 or older who are alone, widowed, divorced, separated or who have partners in nursing homes at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the First Presbyterian Church. Bring a dish to share. Table service and beverage will be provided. For information, call 462-6342.

### Diabetes group to meet Tuesday

The "Journey for Control: Monitoring Your Blood

Glucose" diabetes support group will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the conference room at Citizens Medical Center. The program is free but anyone interested should register in advance. For information or to register, call Jeanene Brown in the hospital's education department at 460-4850.

### Bluegrass benefit is March 19

There will be a benefit dance and concert for the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Festival at City Limits from 7 to 11 p.m. on Saturday, March 19. Featuring Marshal Bailey and the Silver Bullets, cost is \$10 for adults and free for children under 12. Tickets are available at the Dillon's branch of Farmers and Merchants Bank and the Colby Convention and Visitor's Bureau. For information call 460-7643.



8 0 4 8 7 9 1 3 8 9 8 3