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State money shift forces center to close

By Kevin Bottrell

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After 25 years, the Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center is closing its Colby office.

The center lost two grants that covered substance abuse prevention and juvenile delinquency prevention. Executive Director Sue Evans said this has forced the center to cut 3 1/2 positions and close its office at 505 N. Franklin Ave.

However, she said, the Smart Start pro-

gram will still operate out of its office on 460 N. Garfield Ave., and the center will operate its child abuse prevention program. Evans, who has been with the center since it began, will still serve as executive director.

The center opened in 1986 as a local prevention center. It became a regional prevention center when the state reorganized its prevention efforts into regions in 1987.

Evans said the lost grants are not a budget cut, but rather a redistribution of federal money. Kansas Addiction and Pre-

vention Services, a division of Social and Rehabilitation Services, chose to allocate federal grants to higher population counties and counties with higher rates of underage and binge drinking. Evans said the nine counties served by the center have fairly low substance abuse rates.

The Communities that Care survey, given to sixth, eighth, 10th and 12th graders each year, found that 21.5 percent of Thomas County youth had a drink of beer, wine or hard liquor and 3 percent said they had smoked marijuana during the 30 days before the survey. These rates

are lower than the state average and, with a few exceptions, have been decreasing over the past 10 years.

“Our use rates are lower,” she said, “but still not acceptable.”

The rate of binge drinking – more than five drinks in a row – among youth is 15 percent, higher than the state average. However, last year’s rate was 9 percent, lower than the state average. Evans said the rates often fluctuate from year to year.

Even with the center closing, Evans said she will still be working to prevent

substance abuse, but approaching it differently. She will work with the Thomas County Coalition’s Healthy Communities Initiative and continue writing grant applications for prevention money.

Evans said there will be no more funding for juvenile delinquency prevention in the area, but substance abuse prevention will still be covered. The state has gone out for bids on substance abuse prevention for what is now a 21 county area – the counties formerly covered by

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Enjoying the picnic



ROBIN TUBBS/Colby Free Press

A pair of picnickers ate lunch and listened to local band Pieces of 8 on Wednesday in Fike Park. Next week’s Picnic in the Park will feature Bobbi Barton and hot dogs by Hi-Plains Co-

op, with donations accepted toward the Colby Kiwanis Club’s Fourth of July fireworks display.

City to help build new playground north of the pool

By Kevin Bottrell

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The Colby City Council pledged \$75,000 toward playground equipment and park improvements at the Colby Aquatic Center at its meeting Monday, leaving about \$7,500 in the capital improvement reserve for maintenance at the other parks.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said Mike Woofter of Woofter Construction is heading up the project and needed to know how much the city is willing to contribute before getting an architect to plan out the park, which will be on the north side of the new pool by the walking trail.

Armstrong said the city puts several thousand dollars away each year to go toward parks improvement. By the end of this year, the city will have \$82,500 set aside. She initially asked the council to put up \$100,000, with the extra \$17,500 coming from elsewhere in the city budget, but Councilman Mark Beringer instead suggested \$75,000, which the council approved.

“I’m all for the playground equipment,” said Councilman Fred Taylor, “but I hesitate to use it all out there when we have so

many other parks.”

Armstrong said the city and the walking trail committee may also be able to get some grants or donations to supplement the city’s money.

Woofter also wanted to know how much park area there should be around the playground. Armstrong suggested four acres of grass under a sprinkler system and plant buffalo grass on the rest, to which the council agreed.

In other business:

- The council considered hiring Johnson Controls to conduct an audit of the city’s water and electric meters. The audit would cost about \$112,000, which would include meter testing and new water meters. The company will also repair any meters found to be inaccurate.

Armstrong said in the long run, the city will save if meters are more accurate and water loss is kept to a minimum because the city will have to purchase fewer water rights.

Craig Hannah of Johnson Controls said the company will also evaluate the economic impact of any upgrades and present a recommendation to the council.

The company has already done

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Legion event to begin Friday

“Ride Against the Wind,” the American Legion Riders’ largest fund raiser of the year, will begin Friday night.

The riders will have a cruise-in for bikes and cars in the show at 5:30 p.m. in Westside Park.

There will be a sunrise ride at 6 a.m. Saturday and the main event of the weekend – the dice run – will kick off at 10:30 a.m. It will have stops in Hoxie, Grainfield and Oakley before returning to Colby. Participants will roll dice at each location. The highest hand will win \$1,000 and the lowest hand \$250. Awards will be given for the oldest bike and the bike that traveled the longest distance to be in the run.

Van’s Body and Frame of Colby is providing the prize money.

On Saturday there will be helicopter rides taking off from Westside Park. Tickets are \$50. Money raised during the event will go to a variety of charities that benefit Armed Forces veterans and active duty troops.

The riders will hold a “show and shine” car and bike show from 1:30 to 5 p.m. Sunday at the American Legion post, 1850 W. Fourth St., followed by a parade in downtown. There will be vendors – including National Guard recruiters – at Westside Park throughout the day.

Agency predicting poor wheat crop

WICHITA (AP) – Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service is sticking by its earlier forecast for the state’s winter wheat crop.

The agency reported in an update released Thursday that the size of this year’s crop is expected to be 261.8 million bushels from

7.7 million acres. That is unchanged from last month, but is down 27 percent from last year’s production. If realized it would be the smallest wheat crop in Kansas since 1996. Wheat harvest began last week in south-central Kansas. The new forecast is based on crop

conditions on June 1.

The service says it expects yields to average 34 bushels per acre. That is the same as last month’s estimate, but is down 11 bushels an acre from a year ago. If realized, it would be the worst average yield since 2007.

Kansas attorney general joins second health care suit

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA – Attorney General Derek Schmidt has brought Kansas into another lawsuit against the federal health care overhaul enacted last year, and he said Tuesday that the move will help states flesh out arguments they expect to be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The lawsuit is before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which has scheduled arguments from attorneys for September. Five individuals from three states allege a federal mandate that most Americans buy health insurance, starting in 2014, violates their religious liberties because their beliefs compel them not to purchase coverage.

Schmidt and attorneys general for 13 other states ignored that issue in filing a friend-of-the-

court brief last month asking the appeals court to strike down the mandate. Instead, they argued, the mandate represents an unprecedented expansion of federal power not allowed by the U.S. Constitution. Schmidt also said the attorneys general are concerned about what they perceive as an overly broad ruling by a federal judge.

But the Republican attorney general faced criticism from Kansas Democratic Party Chairwoman Joan Wagnon, who called getting involved in a second lawsuit “absurd.”

Kansas already is among 26 states challenging the federal health care overhaul in a lawsuit filed in Florida that’s scheduled to be heard Wednesday by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. Schmidt said he may consider bringing Kansas into other cases.

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Briefly

Kiwanis needs help for fireworks

The Colby Kiwanis Club is accepting donations to help pay for their Fourth of July fireworks display. Kiwanis member Rick Dickman said contributions are appreciated since costs go up each year. To donate, send a check to Kiwanis Club, Box 501, Colby, Kan., 67701.

Oldest church celebrates birthday

First Christian Church, the first church established in Colby, will celebrate its 125th anniversary with a special worship service at 10 a.m. Sunday at the church 385 W. Third, followed by dinner and fellowship time. For information, call 460-2718.

Mingo church offers concert

The Echoes of Hope quartet from Rio Grande Bible Institute in Edinburg, Texas, will perform a

gospel concert at 10:45 a.m. Sunday at Mingo Bible Church. The four women accompany themselves with guitar and violin. Bob Kracht, their sponsor, will present a Bible message. The concert is open to the public. For information contact Pastor Tom Peyton at 462-2930.

Food sign up open now

Prairie Land Food sign up is open until Monday at State Farm Insurance, 905 E. Fourth St. Delivery will be Saturday, June 25, at the Sacred Heart School Gym. For information, call Gene Griffon at 460-3579.

Seniors plan potluck Tuesday

The group More Fun Together plans a potluck 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.

Hospital to hold diabetes class

The Citizens Medical Center will have a diabetes support class, “Journey for Control: On the Road to Better Managing Your Diabetes,” from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday in the hospital conference room. The beginning of a four-class series, it is free but pre-registration is requested. For information or to register, call Jeanene Brown at 460-4850.

Pick up grave decorations

All Memorial Day or other temporary grave decorations at Beulah Cemetery must be picked up by 5 p.m. next Wednesday so the staff can resume regular mowing. For information, call caretaker Deb Henry

at 462-3188.

Mingo church plans Bible school

Mingo Bible Church will hold Vacation Bible School from 6 to 8:45 p.m. Friday, June 17, and from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, June 18, at the church. With this year’s theme, “Rev It Up: Full Throttle for God,” kids aged 4 to fifth grade will learn what the Bible says about being a member of God’s team. Lunch will be provided Saturday. For information, call the church at 460-7530.

