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Citizen asks commission to join tax zone

By Christina Beringer

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Thomas County resident Juanita Gatz addressed the Thomas County commissioners at Monday's weekly meeting, asking them to file a resolution for the county to be included as a Rural Opportunity Zone in Senate Bill 198.

By passing a resolution and appropriating money in the 2012 budget, Thomas County would gain participation in the bill, which was approved by Governor Sam Brownback on March 31. The bill gives tax credits to individuals and student loan incentives for relocating to

Thomas County after living outside Kansas to help increase economic development for rural counties.

Governor Brownback visited the Colby Municipal Airport in April for a ceremonial signing of SB198.

"We must stop the exodus of our young people, or end up as a geriatric village," Gatz said. "Thomas County offers a wonderful quality of life and a healthy future to young individuals and families."

The commissioners thanked Gatz for sharing her thoughts on SB198 and agreed with her, but Commissioner Ken Christensen reminded his colleagues that they have a lot of questions left unanswered.

"The part that concerns me, if you re-

member when Governor Brownback visited the airport, is that after the first year, Topeka may decide to opt out from funding this program," he said. "Then what? Do we opt out, too?"

Part of the funding that Thomas County would have to include in their budget is a \$1,500 contribution per year for five years for each student who qualifies to get help with student loan repayment up to \$15,000. However, the commissioners said, without knowing how many students to account for, it is virtually impossible to accurately budget for the program.

In other business, the commissioners:

• Heard from Tuffy Taylor and Brandon Booi from Colby Dodge and Mike Tubbs

from Tubbs and Sons, who wanted to inform the commissioners they had not had the opportunity to bid on two 2010 Dodge Chargers that were recently purchased by the Thomas County Sheriff's Office from Independence, Mo., for \$40,000.

"It hurts me to think our own service people go out of county and state to purchase equipment," said Taylor, owner of Colby Dodge.

Christiansen told the dealership representatives that Sheriff Rod Taylor informed them at last week's budget meeting that two new cars had been purchased, but nothing further had been discussed.

Commissioner Paul Steele said that based on recommendations from depart-

ment heads and a thorough review of the departments income and expenditures, they decide how much each entity receives, but they are not in control of how the money is spent after the budget is dispersed. That, he said, is at the discretion of the department head.

"I don't think the county owes us anything," said Tubbs and Sons owner, Mike Tubbs, "just the opportunity to participate."

• Discussed 2012 budget recommendations with representatives from the Thomas County Conservation District and the Regional Recycling Center.

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A bird's eye view



EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press

The helicopter brought in by the American Legion on Saturday proved popular, giving many citizens a bird's eye view of the Colby Aquatic Center also shows the cleared land to the north (top right) where the Colby Walking Trail and park will be built.

Projects planned for U.S. 36

By Steve Haynes

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Twenty years of highway improvements in Kansas have left U.S. 36 in pretty good shape across the state, a Department of Transportation official told members of the U.S. 36 Association on Friday in Phillipsburg, but the state will be doing some work on the road this summer.

One of those jobs will be an innovative project in Oberlin, where a contractor working south of town will provide asphalt and place it, while state workers haul the material, take care of traffic control and other details.

Jeff Stewart, district engineer for northwest Kansas in Norton, said improvements to Kansas roads began in 1989 with the Comprehensive Highway Program created by Gov. Mike Hayden. A three-year interim program followed, then the 10-year Comprehensive Transportation Program under Gov. Bill Graves from 2000 to 2009.

Last year, the state launched T-Works, a 10-year, \$8.2 billion plan to maintain and improve Kansas roads, airports, rail lines and other facilities. Stewart said the new program is smaller and more focused on preserving what we have, but includes 27 "improvement" projects in addition to maintenance.

Preservation will get the lion's share of the money, \$4.2 billion, he said, while the modernization and expansion projects will take \$1.7 billion, transit \$100 million, aviation \$46 mil-

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Four new faces join newspaper staff

By Kevin Bottrell

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The Colby Free Press has returned to full strength with four new employees.

Tomi Miller, a part-time society reporter, was the first of the new hires. She joined the Free Press in May.

She has lived in Colby all her life and will be a junior at Colby High School next school year. Always one to keep busy, she will be involved in cheerleading, the Young Humanitarians, debate, forensics, student council and student ambassadors. In the past she has been a member of the dance team, the tennis and track teams, Students Against Destructive De-



T. Miller



S. Harris



K. Cornett



C. Beringer

visions and *The Eagle Talon* - the student newspaper staff.

Miller said she isn't sure what she wants to do after high school, but is considering careers in journalism, law or pharmacy.

Outside school, Miller dances at Ashly's Dance Center and works in the summer at the Colby Recreation Fields, keeping score, working the concession stand and help-

ing with T-ball practice. In what spare time she has, she enjoys spending time with her friends.

Her duties at the *Free Press* include writing up society news, general news writing and event coverage.

Shannon Harris is the newest advertising representative. She is originally from Oberlin and still has a lot of family there. She

moved to Colby in her junior year of high school. In addition to her work at the *Free Press*, she is studying nursing at Colby Community College, and hopes to transfer to Fort Hays State University to study radiology.

In her spare time, she likes to barbecue and go swimming with her daughter, who will be 2 years old in July.

Harris is in her third week at the *Free Press*, and said she has enjoyed her work as an advertising representative so far.

"I love sales," she said. "I love to talk."

Her duties include working with advertisers and representing the *Free Press* at local events.

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Businesses hold grand openings

To celebrate their move to new locations, The Sports Shoppe and Maurices are throwing grand openings today, Friday and Saturday.

Both businesses have moved to a brand-new building on South Range, across the parking lot from Walmart. The Sports Shoppe had been located downtown on Franklin Avenue, while Maurices had been in the shopping center on Range Avenue.

The Sports Shoppe's grand opening will be from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and Friday and

from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday. Customers will get 70 percent off store wide and be able to register for door prizes and a chance to win gift certificates. Refreshments will be served Friday.

Maurices' grand opening will be from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday. There will be a store-wide buy one, get one half off sale, with free giveaways to the first 100 customers. People can also sign up to win one of four \$100 shopping sprees.

Briefly

Cancer benefit to begin Friday

Come cheer on the teams at Relay for Life from 7 p.m. Friday to 7 a.m. Saturday at Dennen Field. The survivors lap will begin after a short introduction ceremony at 7 p.m. Friday, after which the main relay will begin. Cancer survivors and caregivers can sign up for the lap by calling Margaret Kummer at 460-4877 or 460-8095. For other information, call Irene Hartwell at 443-0974.

Arts campers to hold show

Shepherd's Staff is holding a Creative Arts Camp this week, which will culminate in a program for the public at 7 p.m. Friday at the conference center, 240 Main St. in Rexford. The program will showcase skills the campers have learned in areas such as art, drama, music, puppetry and stagecraft. For information, call the center at (888) 687-2565.

Center has prevention materials

The Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention center has videos, brochures and other materials on subjects like parenting, substance abuse and neglect prevention available at its office at 140 W. Fourth St. The center is closing on Thursday, June 30, and is looking to give away its materials. For information, call the center at 460-8177.

Learn about miracles in Brewster

The Brewster Community Church will have Vacation Bible School from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday for children from kindergarten to sixth grade. This year's theme is "The Miracles of Jesus." For information or to register, call (785) 694-2720 or (785) 694-3353.

Mingo church plans Bible school

Mingo Bible Church will hold Vacation Bible

School from 6 to 8:45 p.m. Friday and from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday 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.

RC club open for dads and kids

The First Baptist Church's RC Car Racing Club will have a "Dads and Kids" open racing time followed by pizza and drinks from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday at the church, on the corner of Grant and Webster. For information, call Pastor Craig Crossman at 462-2336 or 443-5154.

Swedish Singers to perform here

The Young Swedish Singers will hold a free concert at 7 p.m. Monday at the Frahm Theatre at Colby

Community College. The 34-member gospel singing group from Sweden performs gospel, hymns and Swedish folk music. For information, contact the Trinity Lutheran Church at 462-3497.

Picnic in the Park on Wednesday

Picnic in the Park will be at noon on Wednesdays at Fike Park. The entertainment for this Wednesday will be the Bugbee Sisters. The event is sponsored by the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Colby Free Press. In case of inclement weather, listen to KXXX/KRDQ. For information, call the chamber office at 460-3401.



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