



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

County gets good marks on audit report

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press
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Representatives from Adams, Brown, Beran & Ball attended Monday's regular meeting of the Thomas County commissioners to present the 2010 audit.

Brian Staats, certified public accountant and partner of the firm, said the 2010 year began with \$3.48 million in unencumbered cash and ended with \$3.49 million. "All of the funds are positive," reported Staats, "and the booklet states that we are

giving the best opinion available to the county."

However, he did give recommendation that the county should have more funds held back for a cushion in case of emergency and said there are a few violations he is citing, most of which have to do with software glitches that were dealt with towards the end of 2010.

"On Dec. 31st, there was about \$64,000 in county funds that were unsecured," Staats said, "because there weren't enough pledged securities at the bank."

Staats said the county should have

been on top of this and that it was not the bank's responsibility to inform the county of the matter.

"We do have documentation from the bank stating the funds were in fact pledged," replied County Treasurer Donita Applebury. "However, FDIC didn't date it until Jan. 4."

With the issue explained, Staats told the commissioners that, "for a county of your size, you are really in good shape, from a debt standpoint."

Accountant Chris Halbleib also gave a briefing regarding a management letter

and a governance letter, pointing out positive and negative aspects that were found during the audit.

In particular, Halbleib noted a lack of separation of duties in county personnel. He and Staats also gave advice on how to record journal entries and transfers for better recording and commented on the large number of bank accounts being used.

"We also want to commend the county sheriff's department for paying attention to last year's recommendations," said Halbleib. "Changes were noted and are

appreciated."

In other business, the commissioners:

- Noted that new security cameras for patrol vehicles had been paid for. The cameras were approved during a meeting last month.

- Nominated existing trustee and Decatur County Commissioner Ralph Unger to represent Thomas County on the Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative for Counties Consortium. Commissioner Ken Christiansen was nominated as the voting

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Swingin' with the U.S. Navy



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Musician First Class Jeremy Middleton (left) and Senior Chief Musician Keith Arneson of Country Current, the U.S. Navy's premier country and bluegrass band, performed for a good-

sized crowd Sunday in the Colby High School auditorium. The seven-man band came to Colby as part of the Western Plains Art Association's fall season.

College runners are first in nation

For the first time in the school's history, the Colby Community College mens cross country team is ranked first in the nation.

The team, coached by James Ortiz, finished 11th in the country last year, second in the conference and third in the region, the best cross country season in school history, but this year's team may be poised to surpass it.

The Trojans jumped into the National Junior College Athletic Association Hill 'N' Dale national rankings after last week's victory at the Colby meet. Hill 'N' Dale is the official Division I cross country rankings.

That win was the first time the Colby team has won a meet in several years. Colby runners grabbed four of the top eight places.

Central Arizona College is ranked second, followed by Iowa Central Community College in third, and Garden City Community College in fourth.

Colby had been set to face Garden City, the team's biggest rival, at the home meet last week, but the Bronbusters dropped out at the last minute. The two teams will meet up Friday in El Dorado.

Coach Ortiz is in his third year as the men's head coach. He graduated from Texas State University-San Marcos with a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies. He earned his USA Track and Field Level I coaching certification in 2008. Ortiz is currently pursuing his masters' degree in sports administration at East Central University.

Get tests and advice at the Wellness Fair

By Christina Beringer

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For more than 35 years, the Thomas County Wellness Fair and Healthy Lifestyle Expo has been providing opportunities to learn about health and nutrition. This year, additional services will be offered, prizes and a scavenger hunt will complete the fun, informational event.

For just \$5, people can attend the expo from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Oct. 8, in the student union of Colby Community College.

Health-related businesses, civic organizations, fitness experts and health professionals will be available to promote services in the area, answer questions and provide explanation on lab results to participants who receive reduced-price tests preceding the event.

The reduced-price lab tests and screenings are available with no appointment necessary from

6 a.m. to 9 a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 27, until Saturday, Oct. 1, in the Specialty Clinic Area at Citizens Medical Center.

"The tests that are offered prior to the expo are available on a first-come, first-served basis and are much more affordable than what they normally would be," said Courtney McCartney, expo volunteer and dietician at Citizens Medical Center. "We also stress that the tests are simply for informational purposes only, and it is strongly recommended that appointments are made with the person's primary caregiver after the expo."

Some of the screenings that are available include a comprehensive test which includes blood work, liver profile, and tests for cholesterol; diabetes diagnosis and management screenings; a screening to help determine a person's risk for heart disease; baseline electrocardiogram; prostate exam; and

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Lawyers, school districts prepare for funding trial

By John Milburn

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Attorneys for the state and a coalition of Kansas school districts continue to prepare their respective cases in a lawsuit over funding of public schools tentatively set to go to trial in June 2012.

A three-judge panel in Topeka will decide if the state is adequately funding elementary and secondary education.

Newton attorney John Robb represents the school districts. Robb said Wednesday he and others are gathering evidence throughout Kansas on the effects of three years of cuts in state funding.

"It's moving along," Robb said of the case. "I don't think it ever moves as fast as anyone wants."

The lawsuit contends that the

state is in violation of a 2005 Kansas Supreme Court ruling that found the system for funding public schools unconstitutional. Legislators responded from 2005 and 2006 by increasing funding by more than \$1 billion, aimed at raising the base state aid for all students, while targeting students that were deemed at risk of academic failure.

However, declining state revenues in subsequent years caused by the Great Recession forced the state to roll back those increases to below 2006 levels.

Robb said school districts were able to keep the cuts in the 2009 and 2010 from impacting the classroom by delaying purchases of high-dollar items, such as replacing buses or updating textbooks and curriculum. Reserve accounts were tapped to cover the reductions, but Robb said cuts this legislative session are now causing

Author to speak on rural decline Tuesday

By Debbie Schwanke

Colby Community College

Richard Wood, former reporter for the Rocky Mountain News, attorney and author, will be the first speaker of the school year for the Dr. Max Pickerill Lecture Series at Colby Community College.

The talk will begin at 7 p.m. on Tuesday in the Cultural Arts Center. There is no charge to attend.

Wood's most recent book, "Survival of Rural America: Small Victories and Bitter Harvests," was selected as a Notable Book by the Kansas Center for the Book at the State Library of Kansas. The paperback edition was published in March, 2010.

Wood's book examines the causes and effects of the massive depopulation of rural communities throughout the world. Using Kansas as a stand-in for rural areas everywhere, Wood tells the stories of people in small, remote towns who are trying to stabilize their populations, and in most cases are failing to do so.

According to the author, the book also provides a counterpoint to "What's the Matter With Kansas," by Thomas Frank, in which he argued that the decline of rural Kansas

was primarily caused by the political choices made by Kansans. In his book, Wood contends that rural decline is a worldwide phenomenon largely unaffected by politics.

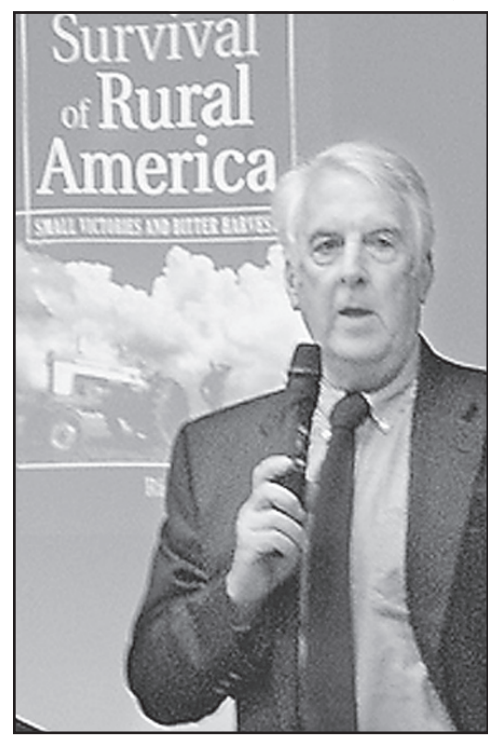
The book also examines the effects on rural America of government policies, changes in agriculture — including productivity increases, the introduction of sustainable farming and ranching methods, and the quest for alternative energy sources. It addresses the importance of rural America to the country's culture and identity.

Wood received his undergraduate degree in history from the University of Kansas, his master's degree from New York University in political science, and his juris doctorate from Georgetown Law Center in Washington, D.C.

His first book, "Here Lies Colorado," is a history of the state told with a series of short biographies of notable Coloradans and Colorado families.

The Max Pickerill Lecture Series is funded annually by anonymous donors. It is named for chemistry professor Max Pickerill, who died in May.

For more information contact Linda Davis-Stephens at 460-5528.



Richard Wood, a reporter, lawyer and author, will speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Colby Community College on the decline of rural America.



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