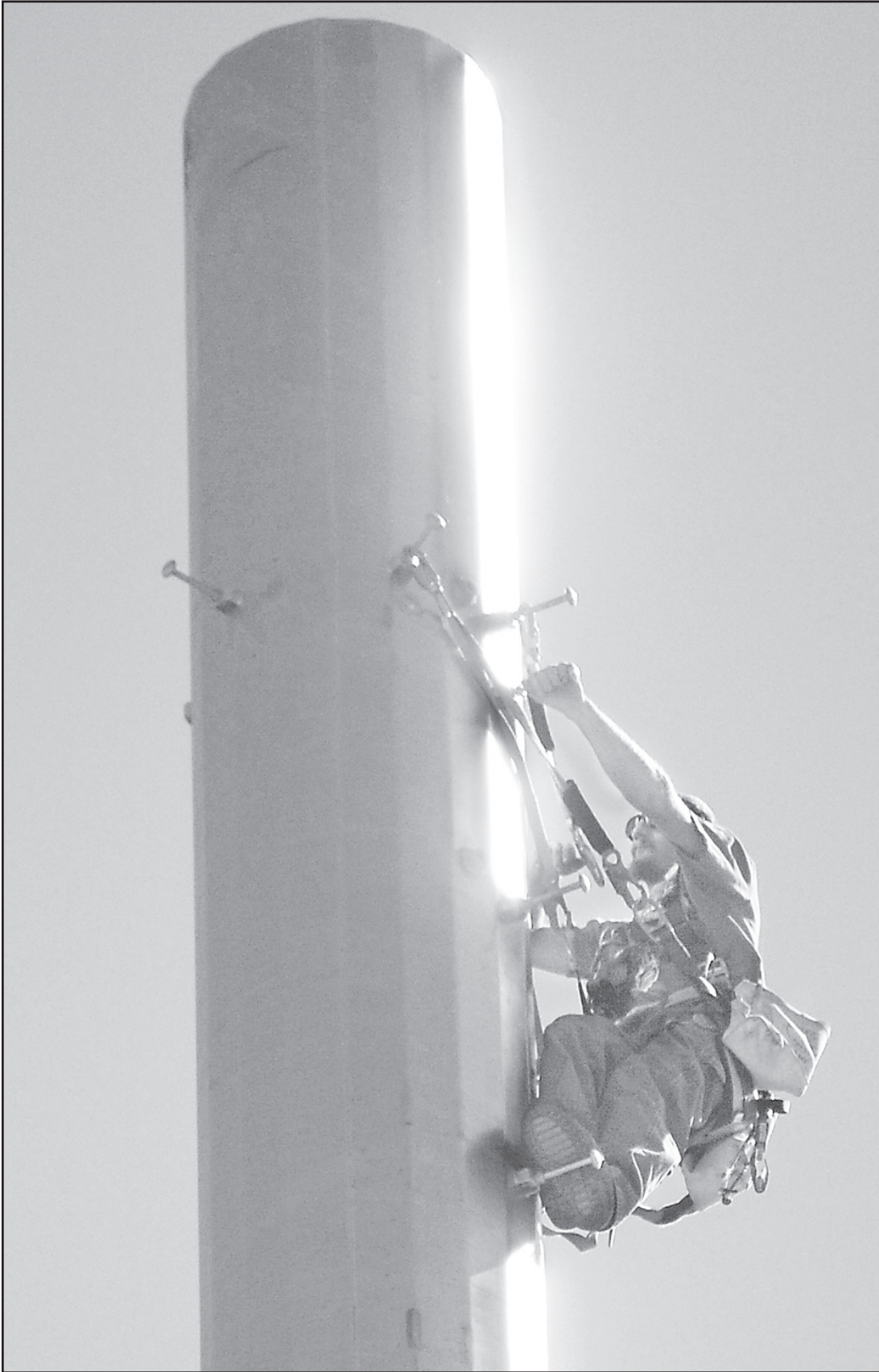




# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

## High-wire act



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

A worker dangled from a harness Friday while working on a new Verizon Wireless cell tower being built at the corner of Fifth Street and Martin Avenue.

## Olympics convoy brings in \$100,000

The combined southwest and northwest Special Olympics Kansas convoys set a record this year, with 89 trucks and 39 motorcycles raising \$104,814.

More than 750 people attended both events and the activities surrounding them. The southwest convoy was held in June, ending in Cimarron. The northwest convoy was held on Sept. 11, with two legs starting from Goodland and Oakley and traveling on I-70 to meet in Colby.

"Kansas was in the top 10 convoys in the United States last year for our efforts, and this year we hope to reach No. 2 status," said Luke Schulte, special

events director with Special Olympics Kansas. "This success is about the input and dedication of committee chairs, Vic Fisher and Michelle Leatherwood in Dodge City and Joe, Jane and Denise Mentlick in Colby. Thanks to all volunteers, communities, drivers, and law enforcement agencies who participated."

"This event is held specifically for the athletes of Special Olympics," said Joe Mentlick, northwest Kansas convoy chair. "To see the look on their face

See "CONVOY," Page 2

## High school debate team takes third at tournament

The Colby High School debate team placed third at the tough Buhler Crusader Classic Debate Tournament on Saturday.

The Eagles, one of 28 teams in the tournament, were the only school other than Hays to represent western Kansas. First place went to Sterling and third place to Salina Sacred Heart.

In the Novice Division, the two-person team of senior Connor Kriss and freshman Cheyne Weis finished the day in a tie for the eighth place medal. On the tie-break based on speaker points they

ended up in ninth with a record of 4 wins, 1 loss and 20 speaker points for the day.

In the Open Division, Colby debaters faced teams from Augusta, Valley Center, Salina South, Lyons, Wichita-East, Newton, Kingman, Wichita Collegiate, Campus, Hays, Ellinwood, Larned, Great Bend and Riley County. Senior Michael Tubbs and sophomore Walter Vacik brought home the third place medal with 4 wins, 1 loss and 18 speaker points.

Other teams competing in Open were sophomores Ian Koerper-

ich and Colton Rundel (1 win/4 losses), seniors Hannah Matchell and Madison Gawith (3 wins/2 losses with 22 speaker points); juniors Tomi Miller and Cameron McLaughlin (3 wins/ 2 losses with 20 speaker points).

Each school's three best records – with at least one team in each division – are combined to figure the overall team placings. The combined scores of Kriss and Weis, Tubbs and Vacik and Miller and McLaughlin were 11 wins, 4 losses and 58 speaker points, earning the team its third place finish.

## Repealer's visit rescheduled

After canceling a planned stop in Colby on Oct. 3, the Kansas Office of the Repealer Secretary Dennis Taylor has announced a rescheduled meeting date and time.

Taylor will meet with the public at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 8, in the Pioneer Memorial Library basement.

The Office of the Repealer was established under Gov. Sam Brownback to find burdensome, unreasonable or out-of-date regulations and make a recommendation to the legislature on which should be repealed. Taylor began conducting meetings all around the state two weeks ago.

At least one advocacy organization is encouraging citizens to attend the meetings and speak to the repealer about specific regulations. Audubon of Kansas, a non-profit conservation group, issued a press release last week asking residents to talk to the repealer about prairie dog eradication statutes. The group cited a case where the Logan County Commission used the statutes to require all landowners to poison the prairie dogs, even those who were attempting to reintroduce black footed ferrets.

The Office of the Repealer also has an online submission form at [repealer.ks.gov](http://repealer.ks.gov), where citizens can submit their ideas.

## Colby radio personality to be given state service award

By Vera Sloan

Colby Free Press  
sl604@st-tel.net

Paul Heskett, the be-boppin, fast talkin' voice of northwest Kansas radio, has captured the coveted Sonny Slater Award for Service to Station and Community for 2011.

Heskett, who began his radio career with the Colby radio station as a college student in 1979, will receive the award on Sunday at the Kansas Broadcasting Association's annual awards meeting in Lawrence. This is a first for any radio personality or station in northwest Kansas.

"Paul just has an unbridled passion for his clientele, the radio industry and the northwest Kansas region," said Sasha Sanguinetti, station manager for KXXX and KQRD, The Ride. "His knowledge of radio, combined with his unique sense of humor, allows him to relate well with whomever he comes in contact."

Sanguinetti added that Heskett's favorite quote: "Don't take life too serious... it's only temporary" describes him perfectly.

"All I've ever done is radio" Heskett

said. "I love the freedom of my job as account representative. I get to work with really great people who have a talent and passion for their job. And my favorite thing about radio is the people I meet and work with."

Heskett said he was thrilled when, as a Colby Community College student in 1979, Communications Instructor Dennis Franz gave him the opportunity to take the microphone for his own nighttime show. He added weekends and holidays to earn extra money. After graduating from the program he spent the next few years at KIOL in Iola, KAYS in Hays and KFNF in Oberlin before returning to KXXX in 1983.

"I've actually worked more years at KXXX than Ed Mason and Weatherman Snider," he said. "And I've been doing Bop Shop Saturday since the 1980s."

Heskett claims Paul Harvey as an idol, and even got to meet him.

"It was like losing a grandpa when he died," he said. "The sad thing was, that when we met I had no idea who he was. He was doing a story about wheat and the farm when I met him on a huge pile of wheat at the Page City elevator many

years ago. I thought he was an insurance salesman or something. He was trying to climb up on that wheat and wanted his picture taken.

"I volunteered to take it, and I didn't even recognize him – but he didn't recognize me either."

Heskett is more than just an on-air personality. He's sales representative for the entire string of Rockin' M Radio stations – 20 in all – stretching from central Kansas to eastern Colorado.

The award he will receive is named to honor Sonny Slater who was farm director for KSAL Radio in Salina for more than 40 years. His dedication to his job saw him up at 2:30 a.m. to go to the station to bring farm news, market and weather to area listeners. He retired in 1990, and the Kansas Association of Broadcasters created the award to recognize Kansas broadcasters who work in the tradition of Sonny Slater – those who have provided so many excellent years of service to their station, audience and community. Sanguinetti said Heskett is a good fit in that category, adding that Heskett's impact in northwest Kansas extends far beyond his billing.

See "RADIO," Page 2



Paul Heskett



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Radio personality and account representative Paul Heskett worked in his office at KXXX. Heskett will be given a service award this weekend by the Kansas Broadcasting Association.

## Survey shows many Kansas school districts cutting jobs and raising taxes

HUTCHINSON – Many cash-strapped Kansas school districts are offsetting state cuts by slashing jobs and increasing local property taxes, according to a survey *The Hutchinson News* conducted of the state's 286 school superintendents.

Of the 72 superintendents who responded, 60 said they have cut a total of at least 633 jobs this year. And at least 42 of the school districts surveyed increased something called the local option budget, which allows them to raise more money

locally than the state provides. Of those that didn't increase the local option budget, 22 couldn't go higher because they already had hit the cap.

"The tax burden has shifted to the local property owners to make up for state aid reductions," Goddard Superintendent Justin Henry told the paper.

The survey also found that in at least 11 districts, the local option budget is generating less money despite a higher mill levy. One reason is that property values are dropping. Another is more complicated and relates to the equalization aid the state provides to about 82 percent of Kansas' "poorest" districts to offset the

fact that a mill in their districts generates less money than a mill in the "richest" 18 percent of districts.

But in the last three years, the state hasn't appropriated enough money to pay all the equalization aid. As a result, the Kansas State Department of Education has prorated the aid, and this year districts will receive only 85.7 percent of the aid due, down from 92 percent last year.

Leavenworth District 453 Superintendent Kelly Crane said the district was able to increase the property tax rate because it hadn't hit the local option budget cap.

Lyons Superintendent Gary Sechrist called the reduction in local option bud-

get equalization aid, which cost his district \$178,000 this year, the "hidden" cut. What captured the headlines during the past legislative session was another cut, in the base amount the state provides per pupil.

However, House Speaker Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, criticized schools for not spending more of their reserves as this year's legislation allowed.

"It's difficult to justify increases in local property taxes to tap additional funds when all but a very few districts had/have the reserves to accommodate their spending decisions," O'Neal wrote in an e-mail to the *News*. "Some schools have unused

Local Option Budget authority. The decision to tap LOB authority is a local decision and certainly was not 'forced' by any action or inaction in Topeka."

The districts insisted there are good reasons to maintain healthy reserve funds. They noted that they've been hit with midyear spending cuts and received delayed payments.

"Midyear cuts and late payments – those are the two reasons districts are carrying reserves," Henry of Goddard said. "There's no way you can plan without having reserves.... You can't put your district in a position not to be able to make a payroll."



8 04879 13898 3