



8 pages

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## 40th loses map battle for districts

By Steve Haynes

Colby Free Press  
s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer lost what may have been his last chance Tuesday at getting a compact district for northwest Kansas out of the state redistricting process and says he thinks the fight will wind up in court.

“We lost the battle,” the Grinnell Republican said Tuesday after coming off the floor. “I think one positive thing that came out of this last map that Steve – Sen. Abrams – and I worked on is that we got close to .04 (percent) on all the districts. I think the courts would look favorably on that.”

The battle was drawn Tuesday between conservative Republicans on one side, and the more liberal leadership, aligned with the chamber’s few Democrats. The redistricting has become part of a larger battle for control of the Senate, with both the Republican caucus and the Senate in control

of the “moderate” Republican faction.

Ostmeyer said that group was entrenched Tuesday as opponents of the leadership’s map took the floor.

“They had their line drawn in the sand,” he said. “They had their 21 votes, and they just sat there and waited on us. We finally voted, and then went home.

“I was ashamed to be in the chamber today.”

The senator’s 18-county 40th District, now mostly square, would stretch to 20 counties along the state’s west and north borders under the leadership’s map, from Syracuse in the southwest to St. Francis and all the way to Mankato in Jewell County.

That’s a drive of more than 325 miles, or more than six hours. And as the senator points out, Jewell County is in eastern Kansas, one county east of the center of the state.

See “BATTLE,” Page 2

## Annual hydrant test



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Don Phillips of the Colby Fire Department had to put some muscle behind his wrench as he started the annual hydrant testing April 24 on the block of Sixth and Garfield. Each year the fire department checks all hydrants after a good thaw to check water pressure and to do any maintenance they may need.

## Chamber of commerce holds annual banquet

By Sharon Friedlander

Colby Free Press  
sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

The Colby-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce named its Business of the Year and Community Service award winners at its annual banquet Saturday at the City Limits Convention Center.

The evening featured dinner, followed by a program that included the recognition of Chamber Diplomats and Ambassadors by outgoing president Tracee Mackley. Tracee reminded everyone that the members of the two groups help to spread

the word on Colby and Thomas County and offer aide and advice to businesses to help them grow and prosper.

Incoming President Tina Harris conducted the installation of new board members Jeremy Quint, Loan Officer, Farmers and Merchants Bank, Jim McLaughlin, Agent with Prairie Land Insurance and Randy Wilson, Senior Vice President, Farm Credit. Quintin Flanagan, Williams Consulting was unable to attend.

Leslie Focke had the honor of announcing the

See “BANQUET,” Page 2

## Discovery of mad cow in California against odds

By Gosia Wozniacka

The Associated Press

HANFORD, Calif. – A nondescript building in the heart of California’s dairy country has become the focus of intense scrutiny now that mad cow disease has been discovered in a dead dairy cow.

The finding, announced April 24, is the first new case of the disease in the U.S. since 2006 – and the fact that the discovery was made at all was a stroke of luck. Tests are performed on only a small portion of dead animals brought to the transfer facility

near Hanford.

The cow had died at one of the region’s hundreds of dairies, but hadn’t exhibited outward symptoms of the disease: unsteadiness, incoordination, a drastic change in behavior or low milk production, officials said. But when the animal arrived at the facility with a truckload of other dead cows on April 18, its 30-month-plus age and fresh corpse made her eligible for testing by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“We randomly pick a number of samples throughout the year,

and this just happened to be one that we randomly sampled,” Baker Commodities executive vice president Dennis Luckey said. “It showed no signs” of disease.

The samples went to the food safety lab at the University of California, Davis on April 18. By April 19, markers indicated the cow could have bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a disease that is fatal to cows and can cause a human brain disease in people who eat tainted meat. It was sent to the department’s lab in Iowa for further testing.

## Hospital runs test on new digital scope

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkansas.com

The surgical department at Citizens Medical Center was able to put a new digital scope for colonoscopies through its first rigorous test on April 24.

After using the new machine on 12 patients throughout the day, Kile Magner, surgical services director and radiology manager, said the scope really outshined the old standard-definition equipment.

“The high-definition picture is outstandingly more clear,” he said. “It’s like going from a fuzzy television to HD. It’s just better.”

Magner said that with the new scope, they are better able to see polyps, and that results in a greater chance of finding colon cancer in patients earlier.

“It used to be easy to miss the flat polyps, especially, because they blend in so well with the surrounding tissue,” he said. “Now, the picture comes out so much more clearer, and the chances of detecting cancer early on are much greater.”

He noted that colon cancer is the most curable of the cancers if detected in time, and said the new machine should be invaluable in

helping to save peoples’ lives.

“Nobody wants to come in for an elective colonoscopy,” he said, “and we all understand that. It’s not fun. It’s embarrassing and uncomfortable. But our staff are professionals and help our patients get through it.

“And, at least with the new machine, the chances of needing to come back a second time are greatly reduced.”

He said the process of finding and removing a tiny polyp is faster, easier and much less invasive than treating cancer, but the first step is to actually come in and get the procedure done.

For people over the age of 50, Magner recommends an annual colonoscopy for most people. He said colon and bowel cancers tend to run in families, so people should be screened more often if they have an immediate family member who has had a polyp and especially if someone in the family has been diagnosed with either of the cancers.

For those under the age of 50 who do not have this cancer in their family’s history, Magner said there are symptoms people can look for.

“There aren’t many nerves in the area, so people are less likely to experience a lot of pain,” he said. “The major symptoms are

See “HOSPITAL,” Page 2



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

Kile Magner, surgical services director and radiology manager at Citizens Medical Center, demonstrated some of the functions of their new high-definition digital colonoscopy scope April 24. He said that when the hospital’s new general surgeon arrives next year, it will be an invaluable piece of equipment used for many new services that the hospital currently does not provide.

## No signals before ship hit yacht

By Elliot Spagat

The Associated Press

ENSENADA, Mexico – Sailboat shards floating in the ocean were the first sign something was wrong.

Eric Lamb spotted them while on safety patrol for a 124-mile yacht race between California and Mexico.

The debris, mostly pieces no more than six inches long, led officials to the bodies of three yacht crew members believed to have been killed when a large ship – perhaps a freighter – slammed into their boat in the middle of the night, California’s second deadly yacht race accident in a month. A boat that smashed into rocks and capsized during a race off Northern California two weeks ago prompted the Coast Guard to temporarily stop races in ocean waters outside San Francisco Bay.

Farther south though, the Newport Ocean Sailing Association’s race between Newport Beach, Calif., and Ensenada, Mexico, went forward on Friday. On Saturday afternoon, Lamb spotted the wreckage of the Aegean. Lamb, 62, said the 37-foot racing yacht looked like it “had gone through a blender.”

Officials suspended the search for a fourth sailor later that day.



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