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Water law deadline is approaching

By Steve Haynes

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Farmers who want to take advantage of a new Kansas law allowing them to average water use over five years face a couple of looming deadlines.

Those who overpumped a water right last summer must have their paperwork either postmarked before Sunday or turned in by 5 p.m. Wednesday, July 18, in order to join the Multi-Year Flex Account program – and avoid enforcement action.

Wayne Bossert, manager of Groundwater Management District No. 4 in Colby, said few if any area farmers should need help for last year, but it is available. It applies to farmers who took out drought emergency permits and to those who failed to do so, but want to avoid penalties for over-pumping.

The second deadline, and one that could affect a lot of people in

this area, he said, is for 2012 irrigation use. Applications for the program covering the current year are due by Monday, Oct. 1. The state Division of Water Resources notes that application deadlines are set by law and cannot be waived.

The program allows water-right holders to convert groundwater rights from a yearly amount to a five-year total. There is no restriction on pumping in any given year, but a farmer may not pump more than the five-year total allotment. The base water right remains unchanged and returns unless the farmer applies for a renewal permit.

If it appears you are going to exceed your annual water right this summer, Bossert said, you can escape penalties by converting the water right to a flex account on or before Oct. 15.

Bossert noted that the five-year permit may not add up to the full amount of a well permit.

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City approves park equipment

By Kayla Cornett

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The Colby City Council agreed Tuesday to buy \$97,500 worth of playground equipment for South Franklin Park, just north of the new swimming pool and aquatic center.

Mike Woofter, a member of the city Tree Board, gave the council an update on both the walking trails and the playground, representing the Thomas County Healthy Communities Coalition.

He said they are waiting for the temperatures to cool off some before pouring any more concrete on the walking trails. They lost 13 to 15 trees being moved to north of the aquatic park due to the heat,

he said. Woofter said the entryway for the park is being poured and he and former City Manager Carolyn Armstrong have figured out where the restrooms should go.

Woofter said the committee wanted to buy the playground equipment from Miracle Recreation Equipment Co. of Monett, Mo. He said the firm’s base cost is around \$90,000, so the money the city has set aside will pay for that part of the playground.

He said they plan to put a fence around the playground to separate it from the walking trails and talked about other decorations and equipment that will be installed.

“We’re going add a couple canopies in that playground area,”

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Juggler entertains crowd of about 100

Kaeden McCarty (above right), balanced a basketball on a stick while standing on one foot without the help of Richard Holmgren at the Flying Debris Show Thursday night on the lawn outside of Pioneer Memorial Library. Holmgren (right) juggled pool balls during the show, which was attended by a crowd (below) of about 100 people. At the show, he proclaimed himself to be the world’s best juggler.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press



Former Colby resident raises \$42,000 at charity event

By Christina Beringer

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Former Colby resident Wendy Hills participated as a local celebrity in the Brian M. Anselmo Foundation’s fourth annual “Dancing with the Stars” charity event in Kansas City.

Hills said her goal was to “simply raise

more money than any other dancer had ever raised in the history of the entire event.”

And that she did, with help from her father and step-mother, Doug and Junelle Hills, and people in Colby.

Last year, a librarian raised a record \$15,000, so Hills, who now lives in Prairie Village set her sights at \$20,000 to benefit her favorite charity, Operation

Breakthrough. To her surprise, she more than doubled her goal and was able to raise just over \$42,000.

“I received over \$3,500 in donations from friends, family and local businesses in Colby,” said Hills. “I cannot thank my dad, Junelle and my hometown supporters enough for all of their generosity in supporting me and Operation Breakthrough. With their help, I was able to win the entire event.”

“My dad took my fund-raising commitment to an entirely new level when he hit the streets of Colby to spread the story of Operation Breakthrough and ... Junelle also got into the fund raising at her store, the Interior Connection and Quilt Cabin, by matching donations made by employees and people at one of her quilting workshops.”

Hills said she had one of the loudest cheering sections at the event, since her supporters sneaked in giant clappers and cow bells that were handed to everyone at her table.

“I’m sad to say that the trophy was not the mirror ball I had hoped for like on the actual DWTS show,” she said, “but I will

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Obama to push extension of middle-class tax cuts

By Julie Pace

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is launching a push to extend tax cuts for the middle class, as he seeks to shift the election-year economic debate from the dismal jobs market to assertions that Republican rival Mitt Romney protects the rich.

Obama, in an address from the White House later today, will call on Congress to pass a one-year extension of tax cuts for households making less than

\$250,000 a year.

The president’s appeal to middle-class voters is aimed at drawing a contrast with Romney and congressional Republicans. The House GOP is expected to make its own push this month for an extension of all the Bush-era tax cuts due to expire at the end of the year, including reductions on wealthier income earners.

Obama opposes extending the tax cuts for Americans with higher incomes, while Romney has said he supports extending the expiring cuts for all income

earners.

The president’s shift to the tax debate follows Friday’s lackluster jobs report showing the nation’s unemployment rate stuck at 8.2 percent. And it comes as Democrats embark on a coordinated attack on Romney, intensifying calls for him to explain offshore bank accounts and release several years of tax returns.

The strategy is aimed at portraying Romney, whose personal wealth could exceed \$250 million, as disconnected from middle-class voters.

Emergency grazing approved for 11 more Kansas counties

Emergency grazing of Conservation Reserve Program grassland has been approved for Thomas County through Sept. 30, federal officials said Friday.

Adrian J. Polansky, state executive director of the U.S. Farm Service Agency, made the announcement, which also included Hamilton, Kearny, Morton, Norton, Phillips, Russell, Sheridan, Smith, Stanton and Wichita counties.

“This authorization provides relief for many Kansas livestock producers who have suffered through severe drought conditions,” said Polansky. “The drought has depleted hay supplies and affected

the growth of hay and pasture in parts of Kansas. Many livestock producers cannot maintain their current herds without implementation of CRP emergency grazing.”

Counties previously approved for emergency grazing include Ellis, Graham, Lane, Osborne, Rooks, Trego and Wallace.

Stockmen will be required to leave at least one-fourth of each field or contiguous fields ungrazed for wildlife, or graze not more than 75 percent of the allowable stocking rate. All livestock must be removed by the end of the grazing period, the agency said.

Landowners need to contact the Farm Service Agency county

office at 915 E. Walnut in Colby, 462-7671, to request permission for emergency grazing. Participants then will work with the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop a forage management plan. If the cover is destroyed, it will have to be re-established at the contract participant’s own expense.

Participants must also accept a 25 percent reduction in the annual rental payment for the acres actually grazed.

