



8 pages

COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Thursday

July 19, 2012

Volume 123, Number 112
Serving Thomas County since 1888



Chickens inspected for disease

Jordan Katt (above left) and Jessie Brounger looked at chickens that Katt's family brought to Colby Livestock Auction to be checked Wednesday for pollorum typhoid. Hallie Hasel (left), a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarian, checked a chicken while Kassey Yeager held it up for her. The checkup is required for entry into the county fair.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Appraiser dies at 60

Mary Ruth Cech, of rural Levant, the long-time Thomas County appraiser, died Monday at Hays Medical Center. She was 60.

Cech was born Jan. 19, 1952, in Oakley, and grew up on a farm near Page City, said her brother, Jim Cech of Hays.

She started working at the appraiser's office in 1978 during a statewide reappraisal. She was named county appraiser in May 1984 and served for 28 years.

Cech was "a walking encyclopedia of Thomas County," said assistant appraiser Kathy Cunningham, who started working with her in 2004.



Mary Cech

"Being an appraiser for almost 30 years, she knew just about everybody," Cunningham said. "She knew the county backwards and forwards."

Cech attended Colby Community College briefly but did not graduate. Instead, she took continuing education courses and became a certified Kansas appraiser. She had been a member of the Kansas Real Estate Appraisal Board, the Kansas County Appraisers Association and the Northwest County Appraisers Association.

"You had to have a lot of education," she said.

See "APPRAISER," Page 2

Emmy nods released today

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Mad Men," a piercingly bleak portrait of a 1960s American anti-hero, earned a leading 17 Emmy nominations today and the chance to set a new record as the most-honored drama in television history.

"Mad Men," which has won four best drama series trophies and is tied with "Hill Street Blues," "L.A. Law" and "The West Wing," received a fifth bid in the category.

The miniseries "American Horror Story," a nightmarish saga about a haunted house, received a matching 17 awards, including an acting nod for Connie Britton.

Other leading nominees include the elegant British-born soap opera "Downton Abbey," which earned 16 bids, and two miniseries, "Hatfields & McCoy's," with 16, and "Hemingway & Gellhorn" with 15.

"Modern Family," honored as best comedy series for the past two years, was the sitcom leader with 14 bids and practically ran the table in supporting actor nods, but the category also saw an infusion of girl power.

Breakout comedies with women at their center — in fashion after the box-office success of "Bridesmaids" — proved alluring to Emmy voters.

"Girls," creator-star Lena Dunham's darkly comedic coming-of-age New York story, received best comedy, acting, writing and directing nominations. Zooey Deschanel's offbeat charm in "New Girl" earned her an acting bid.

County receives best opinion from audit firm

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkanas.com

The county's auditors gave Thomas County top marks for financial management in their report Monday, noting only three relatively minor violations of state law.

Chris Halbleib of Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball of Colby told commissioners that based on Kansas law, the firm gave the county the best opinion available but noted the three violations.

Accountant Kalynn Ritter presented recommendations to department heads to improve efficiency.

Halbleib reported that none of the account balances ended in the red, which he said is good, because by law, the county is not allowed to overspend any account.

The summary of cash receipts, expenditures and unencumbered cash showed the county's ending unencumbered cash balance for the general fund at \$327,046 with \$31,173 in outstanding encumbrances and accounts payable.

The general fund includes taxes, licenses and fees and other cash receipts, plus each of the county departments' accounts and appropriations.

"You increased cash by about \$84,000 from last year," said Halbleib, "which is good. It shows stability."

The total ending cash balance, not including agency funds, was just over \$3.7 million.

Brian Staats, a certified public accountant in charge of the firm's Colby office, told commissioners that overall, their financials

are "adequate." He noted that it's considered prudent to keep three to six months worth of cash on hand as carryover in case revenue streams dry up.

Although Halbleib reported mostly good news, he said his firm found three items that violated state law.

He said the first was a budget violation: the mental health and the mental retardation funds spent more than what they were budgeted, by \$2,889 and \$3,523, respectively.

See "COUNTY," Page 2

Forum held in Goodland

By Kevin Bottrell

The Goodland Star News
kbottrell@nwkanas.com

Four Republican candidates for the state Senate and House of Representatives faced off against each other Tuesday at a candidate forum in Goodland.

The forum included both Senate candidates for the 40th District, John Miller and Ralph Ostmeier, and both candidates for the 121st District House seat, Rick Billinger and Ward Cassidy. The event, organized by the Sherman County Republican Committee, also included candidates for sheriff and county commissioner. About 50 people attended.

Jeanie Schields, Republican county chair, allowed each candidate to give a three-minute introduction, then asked each set of candidates one or two questions, allowing a 1 minute response each.

Miller, a member of the Norton County commissioner for 16 years, was the first Senate candidate to speak:

The Legislature needs to change, he said. People are paying too much in property taxes, while a lot of blame was handed out and money was spent on the failed redistricting process.

Miller said he would rather

See "FORUM," Page 2

Midwest Energy donates to hospital

Midwest Energy, which provides natural gas service in Colby, has pledged a three-year, \$30,000 commitment to the Health Care Expansion Project at Citizens Medical Center through the Citizens Foundation.

"As we move forward with our expansion to the Family Center for Health Care (clinic) to accommodate two additional physicians and a general surgeon," said Kevan Trenkle, chief executive officer for Citizens, "it is clear that our community understands the impact health care has on our citizens."

The first of the three physician recruits, Dr. John Dygert, has already arrived in Colby. He is trained in family medicine and obstetrics.

Efforts to recruit a general surgeon started in 1997, said Tama Unger, community relations director for Citizens. Dr. Kelley Gabel

and his wife, family practitioner Dr. Sarah Gabel, will join the team in September 2013.

"We are very thankful to Midwest Energy," Trenkle said, "for their continued efforts to not only provide essential services through their company, but for supporting other essential services such as health care through their generosity."

Citizens and the foundation are raising \$1.9 million to expand facilities for medical services at the clinic and hospital.

"Midwest Energy's vision is building a brighter future for its customer owners," said Earnie Lehman, president and general manager of the co-op. "Access to vital services such as health care is critical to keeping our communities vibrant and growing. We're happy to work with Citizens Medical Center and the foundation to ensure these services continue."

Midwest, a utility cooperative based in Hays, also provides electric service in rural areas, with operations across northwest Kansas.



While discussing the future of health care at the front entrance to the Midwest Energy office on South Range Avenue in Colby, Earnie Lehman (left), president and general manager of Midwest Energy, presented the company's \$30,000 commitment to Kevan Trenkle, chief executive officer of Citizens Medical Center.

TAMA UNGER/Citizens Foundation

