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## County signs on for housing grant

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkansas.com

Thomas County commissioners signed a resolution Monday requesting a grant to help build moderate-income housing in Rexford, where employment growth at the McCarty Dairy has filled the schools and available housing.

Christy Rocca, director of the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance, said she has been helping the McCarty people look into building five duplexes on property they own in Rexford, working with Randy Hrabe, executive director

of the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission based in Hill City.

She said the family enterprise, which owns and operates the dairy west of Rexford, is looking to expand, possibly adding 50 new employees.

"There's definitely a housing shortage in Rexford," said Rocca, "and they are trying to correct that."

Rocca said the dairy provides housing for many of its employees, which helps keep them close to work. The family owns land on Maple and near the school in Rexford where they plan to build 1,250 square foot, three-bedroom duplexes.

They've already received approval from the school district, she said, but this will only be enough to house 10 families. She said there may be money available in the future to help with additional housing needs.

She said the Kansas Housing Resources Corp. has a new grant program. The deadline to apply is Friday, Aug. 31, so they've had about a month to prepare a proposal.

Notification on whether the proposal is approved will be given in October. Rocca said she is optimistic.

In other business:

- Work to establish the Neighborhood

Revitalization Plan in Thomas County is coming to a close after several months of signing resolutions and getting approval from taxing districts.

Rocca received approval for the project from commissioners in late May and has been coordinating public hearings in all 37 taxing districts and educating people on its benefits since then.

The tax rebate program will reimburse property owners for new construction and expansion on their home or commercial building on projects valued at \$25,000 or more.

The proposal was submitted to Lisa Mendoza, an assistant attorney general,

and the alliance is now awaiting her approval. Rocca said she was hoping to hear back from Mendoza last week, but said she has up to 90 days to approve the plan or reject it.

• Thomas County Health Department Director Kasiah Rothchild said she received approval for her annual state Family Planning contract for Thomas and Logan counties.

She also received approval to spend northwest region bioterrorism money on three stock-picker carts for the department's preparedness trailer.

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## School board expects rise in enrollment

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkansas.com

The Colby Public Schools board of education held its monthly meeting Monday night, where it discussed a possible rise in enrollment as well as improvements to the school district.

One of the board's first orders of business was to take a tour of the elementary, middle and high school buildings. One stop was at Dennen Field to see the resurfacing for the track.

Later in the meeting, the board discussed changes to the five-year Capital Outlay Plan for 2012-2013, which is intended for making improvements to school facilities, when Superintendent Terrel Harrison said that the as-

phalt under the astroturf is in bad condition. She said that tearing out the asphalt and laying down a new track would be "very expensive," although she does not have an estimate. Instead, the decision was made to add the resurfacing which, she hopes, will keep the track in good condition for another five years.

After the tour, the board heard reports from the school principals, the athletic director, the curriculum director and the superintendent. All principals reported a rise in enrollment numbers for their schools, although none of the schools have a final count of their students yet.

Athletic Director Larry Gabel reported the number of kids

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## Radio instructor named best in state

Joe Vyzourek, Colby Community College radio instructor and station manager, has been recognized again by Kansas broadcasters as one of the best on-air personalities in the state.

Vyzourek was named – for the fourth time – by the Kansas Association of Broadcasters as the 2012 Small Market DJ Personality

of the Year. He received the same award in 2004, 2006 and 2010. The Atwood native was honored in 2001 and 2002 with a second-place award and he finished third in 2007.

In addition to teaching and managing the college radio sta-

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## Gem Lions Club holds hog roast

Fire Chief Bob McLemore (above right) helped The Bugbee Sisters set up to perform Wednesday evening at the Gem Lions Club's annual hog roast at the Gem Community Building. The entertainment included bluegrass, folk and country music as well as a horseshoe contest, which Dale Herschberger (left) participated in.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

## Welcome to Colby



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Dr. John Dygert (standing), a new physician at Family Center for Health Care, visited with a table of guests Tuesday at his welcome reception at Meadow Lake Golf Course. Citizens

Medical Center put the reception together, which was open to the public.

## Drought worsens despite cooler temps

By Jim Suhr

AP Business Writer

ST. LOUIS – The nation's most withering drought in decades only got worse in several key farming states last week, despite cooler temperatures that at least gave those living there a break from this summer's stifling heat, according to a new drought report released today.

In its weekly map, The U.S. Drought Monitor showed that as of Tuesday, just over two-thirds of Iowa, the nation's biggest corn producer, was in extreme or exceptional drought – the worst two classifications. That's up more than 5 percentage points, to 67.5 percent, from the previous week.

Nearly all of Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and Illinois are in extreme or exceptional drought, with Illinois showing the most-dramatic climb in those categories. In neighboring Indiana, where 5 inches of rain fell in some parts, the area of the state in exceptional or extreme drought fell 9 percentage points, to 37.09 percent.

Conditions cooled in the region, but little or no meaningful rain fell, said Mike Brewer, a National

Climatic Data Center scientist who put together the latest weekly U.S. Drought Monitor map released by the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. The lack of rain allowed exceptional and extreme drought conditions to continue to expand in the area from northern Missouri and into Kansas and Nebraska, he said.

Plains farmers have begun harvesting what corn managed to survive this summer, although in some areas growers cut their fields weeks ago, chalking the year up as a loss. Many ranchers have sold livestock because they had no grass for grazing or money to buy feed, which has soared in cost.

In the lower 48 states, there was a slight increase in the overall area experiencing at least some drought, from 61.77 percent on last week's map to 63.2 percent on this week's. There was little change in the overall area experiencing exceptional or extreme drought, which went from 6.26 percent last week to 6.31 percent this week.

