



8 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Monday

October 22, 2012  
Volume 123, Number 165  
Serving Thomas County since 1888



## Students perform musical

A group of about 50 kids (above) took the stage for the musical "Tall Tales and Heroes" Thursday night in the elementary school auditorium. Individual students (right) came to the front of the stage during the musical, including, from left, Maddy Turner, McKenzie Carmichael, Mya Betz and Makenna Husband. They performed songs about American historical folk tales while their classmates backed them up.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



## Program ready for applications

By Christina Beringer  
Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

Seven applications have been filed so far for property-tax rebates, and the Thomas County Economic Development director wants to remind everyone that the Neighborhood Revitalization Program is ready for people to take advantage of.

"I want to make sure I get the word out as much as I can," Director Christy Rocca said Wednesday. "We are now taking applications for the rebate program, and we don't want to anyone left out."

She said Thomas County commissioners agreed to adopt the tax-rebate incentive, designed to encourage people to build new structures and fix up old ones, for the entire county on May 31. Thomas is one of 84 Kansas counties that offers the program, she said, although some only offer it in specific areas.

"The intent of the plan," she said, "is to promote revitalization and development by stimulating new construction and rehabilitation of residential, commercial and agricultural properties...."

"This will provide the county with long-term increase and stabilization in the property-tax base by encouraging rehabilitation or new construction that may not otherwise happen."

"It provides a huge incentive for (property owners and) existing businesses to expand, renovate and often times increase the size or scope of the original construction or expansion plans."

In addition, she said, the plan increases property values, encourages reinvestment, creates long-term tax revenue without any burden on the public, may help reverse outward migration and helps increase cash-flow for businesses that may struggle during a start-up.

See "PROGRAM," Page 2

## City Council OKs stop signs

By Sam Dieter  
Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkanas.com

Colby residents should be seeing new stop signs soon along Garfield Avenue, the City Council decided Tuesday night, making the north-south avenue a through street for seven blocks between Webster Street and Villa High Park.

With Councilmen Fred Taylor and Tim Hutfles absent, the council approved a motion to put up stop signs for eastbound and westbound traffic along Garfield south of Webster Street at its meeting Tuesday night. The decision came after the council heard from Dennis Diederich, who lives along the southern part of Garfield.

"There's a lot of new families that have moved onto that street," Diederich said. "I don't know; I'd

just like to slow them down."

Police Chief Randy Jones showed the council a map which he had drawn up after Diederich and his wife Sandy first requested the stop signs at the Oct. 2 council meeting. The map showed traffic collisions, including those between moving vehicles and cars hitting stationary vehicles, from Oct. 4, going back to the end of 2007.

"I don't have any recommendations," Jones said. "I'm just not sure that additional stop signs would improve it. It might."

He pointed out that some intersections with stop signs have a lot of accidents, while streets just east of Garfield which do not have stop signs had hardly any at all. Jones noted that the signs can be taken down if they don't help.

See "CITY," Page 2

## Former parks biologist joins nature conservancy

By Sam Dieter  
Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkanas.com

Matt Bain of Colby, who had been a district wildlife biologist for the state, has joined the Nature Conservancy.

Bain said he started working for the conservation group July 23. His main responsibility is as new project coordinator for the Smoky Valley Ranch, near Oakley in Logan County.

"I am very excited about the challenges of managing a working ranch of significant acreage with such diverse objectives," he said. "I am honored to be a part of a team that is dedicated to promoting high, yet feasible, land ethics in western Kansas."



Matt Bain

His new job involves managing the 16,800-acre working cattle ranch and creating a home for the wildlife species found there.

"We use cattle as a tool to manage all those different animals, all those different habitats," Bain said.

This might mean gazing cattle only part of the time on some areas of land, he said, allowing time for the grass to recover. In other cases, cattle are temporarily fenced into a small area, eating away undesirable grasses and helping new ones grow by churning up the soil with their hooves.

Lesser prairie chickens require grass that's high

See "BIOLOGIST," Page 2

## Senators' debate airs live Wednesday

A live debate between two state senators who were thrown together in the 40th District of northwest Kansas, Ralph Ostmeier, a Grinnell Republican, and Allen Schmidt, a Hays Democrat, will

air at 7 p.m. Wednesday on Smoky Hills Public Television.

The program is part of the *Kansas Candidates* series, meant to help viewers become familiar candidates' stances on issues for the upcoming election. Chapman Rackaway, associate professor of political science at Fort Hays

State University, moderates each debate. This program will repeat at 5 p.m. Sunday.

You can catch all of the debates online at [www.smokyhillstv.org](http://www.smokyhillstv.org). All debates will air as part of a Kansas Candidates marathon beginning at 1 p.m. on the Sunday before election day, Nov. 4.

## Tasting wine after 5



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

From left, Chuck Thomas, Leilani Thomas and Janet Harper enjoyed a wine tasting during October's Business After Five Thursday evening at Meadow Lake Country Club. The monthly event is open to members of the Colby business community.

