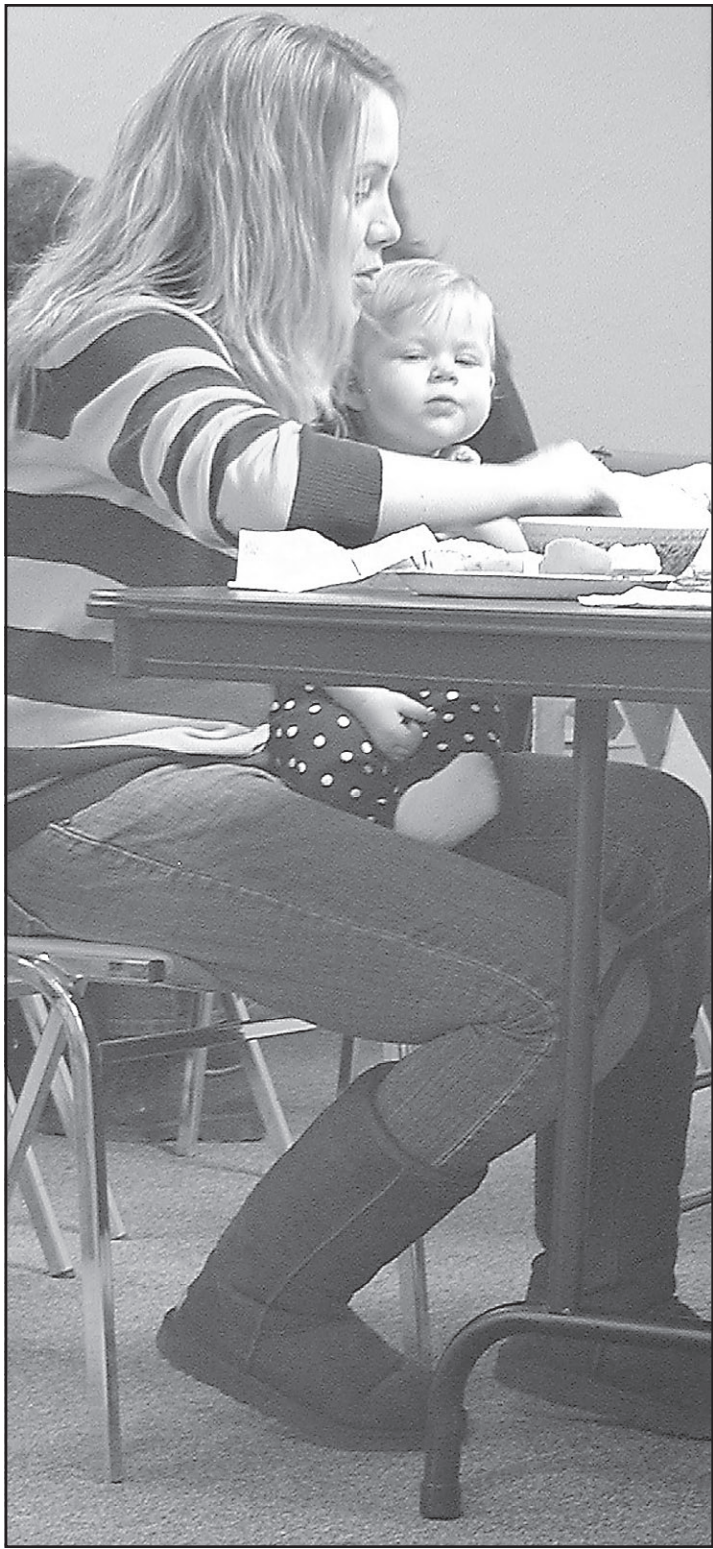




COLBY FREE PRESS

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Presbyterian church cooks up free lunch

Lorraine Horton (above) talked with friends over soup and biscuits at the Once a Month Lunch on Saturday. Anne Marie Pleviak (left) took her son Addison to the lunch, in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church. Almost 50 people ate, including this group (below), and helped serve the free lunch, which is open to anyone who wants to stop by on the second Saturday of each month.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



Man here pleads guilty to stealing

By Sam Dieter

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A Colby native who writes children's plays pled guilty Wednesday to stealing between \$1,000 and \$25,000 from the Quality Inn in Colby, when he was the manager a couple of years ago.

Everett Robert, 35, took a plea agreement Wednesday morning and admitted to stealing between \$1,000 and \$25,000 from the hotel, two days after sending out a notice that one of his plays had been published. He worked briefly at the *Colby Free Press* several years ago.

Robert had been charged with theft of between \$25,000 and \$100,000, a level 7 felony, between May 2010 and October 2011. The charge he pled guilty to is defined as a level 9 felony. Judge Glenn Schiffner set sentencing for Wednesday, Feb. 6, in Thomas County District Court.

Court records show that Robert was arrested Oct. 12 on a warrant that had been issued Feb. 9. He was released Oct. 17 on a \$50,000 appearance bond.

Before his arraignment, Robert said that the people he works with as a playwright know what he was

accused of doing and that he does not handle money when doing plays. He added that he has been attending Fort Hays State University for about a year, studying English education.

"My family lives here," he said. "I have connections to Colby. I just wanted to pursue higher education."

Robert sent a press release to announce that his newest play, "The Absolutely True Story of Tom Sawyer as Told by Becky Thatcher," had been published by Heartland Plays Inc. The play was performed in Hill City in July 2011.

Bill Goodwin, an English teacher at Fowler High School, was principal of the Hill City grade school and directed several of Robert's plays, including "Becky Thatcher," and another called "Allie in Wonderland," performed by grade school students and at the Summer Community Theater.

"He's fantastic," Goodwin said of Robert. "He's a good friend of mine and a very good playwright."

Goodwin said that he met Robert when he was attending Colby Community College. Robert said

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Oakley man tossed from car on U.S. 40

An Oakley man was thrown from his car Saturday night after it rolled when he apparently tried to take a turn too fast on U.S. 40 west of Oakley about 10:30 p.m.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Joshua Joe Ahrens, 34, was about eight miles west of Oakley driving towards town when he took a curve too fast for the weather conditions. His 2001 Pontiac Grand Am rolled through the south ditch and into a field,

ejecting Ahrens, who was not wearing a seat belt.

Ahrens was taken to the Logan County Medical Center, but no one was available to comment on his condition there Monday. The accident report listed him as "disabled," which Tod Hileman, public resource officer for the Troop D of the patrol, said means he had to go to the hospital and possibly couldn't leave the scene of the crash on his own.

Emergency services director says ambulances busy

By Christina Beringer

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Emergency Medical Services Director Joe Hickert gave Thomas County commissioners his December report last Monday, adding that he thinks there must be an error in the number recorded for local runs for 2011, which was 504. He said that's unusually high compared to the

2012 total of 330.

The number of long-distance runs last year compared to 2011 almost tripled, he said, from 39 to 109.

Hickert said the department may be assessed an extra \$500 for Medicare revalidation. This payment was approved by commissioners.

The department will have a Business After 5 event from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 30, at the Emergency Medical

Services building, on the Citizens Medical Center campus at 1275 S. Franklin Ave., he said.

The county has added a paramedic, increasing the number of more-highly-trained workers from two to three, Hickert said. Candy Bryant has passed the written and practical exams after a course of study that took a year, he said.

Hickert told commissioners he plans to hire a few more staff members this year,

depending how many patients they transfer.

In other business, commissioners:

- Established the meeting schedule for 2013 as 9 a.m. the first, second and third Mondays of every month, plus the last business day of the month in the commissioners' room. Special meetings will be set as needed.
- Gave approval to Undersheriff Marc Finley to apply for five fuel cards at Fron-

tier Ag in Brewster. He said a new deputy, Cory Ferguson, lives in Brewster. Four cards were approved for other officers to use there.

• Passed a resolution naming Emergency Management Director Autumn AraSmith as a member of the Northwest Kansas Regional Homeland Security Council. The term will expire in 2014.

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Colby native writes new book

By Sam Dieter

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Nancy Larsen-Sanders, a Colby native, started writing as a child and has been working at that hobby ever since.

"I don't know if I have enough time to tell you," she said when asked what she liked about writing.

Larsen-Sander's new



Larsen-Sanders

"The Mourning Dove's Message," is based in part on her family members' stories about the Colby dust bowl era, she said. The author plans to talk about the book and sign copies at 6:30 p.m. tonight at the Colby Lions Club meeting, one of many appearances she's making for the book. A supper will be served at 6:15 p.m. at the meeting room on the south side of the Colby Community College student union building. The sign-

ing is open to the public.

The book is about a woman in the first half of the 20th century, dealing with the Dust Bowl, hard times and racism.

Larsen-Sanders said it is the first in a series of five historical fiction books she wrote that deal with the Depression era in the 1930s. Much of the material for the book came from research at the Pioneer Memorial Library and the Prairie Museum of Art and History.

Her grandfather, Frederick, emigrated to Kansas from Denmark

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Fiscal issues lead Legislature agenda

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Kansas legislators begin their annual session this morning facing a budget shortfall and a court order to boost spending on public schools, but many want to cut income taxes for the second consecutive year.

Both the House and Senate will have new leaders, conservative Republican majorities and plenty of new faces following last year's redistricting and elections. With GOP moderates ousted from power in the Senate, many lawmakers anticipate reviving a wide variety of failed measures, including proposals to reshape the state's appellate courts and create a 401(k)-style pension plan for new teach-

ers and government workers.

Legislators were to convene in the afternoon to be sworn into office and elect top leaders, a formality after Republicans caucused in December to select Ray Merrick of Stilwell as the new House speaker and Susan Wagle of Wichita as the new Senate president. Gov. Sam Brownback, also a conservative Republican, plans to outline his agenda Tuesday evening in the State of the State address and release details about his budget proposals Wednesday morning.

The governor and legislators must close a projected \$267 million gap between anticipated revenues and existing spending commitments for the

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