



Amphitheater planned near city pool

By Sam Dieter
Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkansas.com

A Kansas State University architecture student came to town last week to sell plans for an amphitheater to be built by walking trails north of the Colby Aquatic Park.

Chelsea Hayes presented her unusual design for the amphitheater first to the Colby City Council on Tuesday night,

then to citizens Wednesday at the Pioneer Memorial Library. Sue Evans and Megan Carmichael of the Thomas County Healthy Communities Coalition have been working with her on the project, and were with her for both presentations.

The design includes limestone seating and an asymmetrical layout of walls behind the stage, with a lattice roof of treated wood and metal overhanging it. The walls would be made out of rammed earth, made by placing loose soil into a

form, like concrete, and pounding it until it become solid.

"What you dig out of the ground, you just put right back into the site," she said.

Hayes, who said she is planning to graduate this spring with a master's degree in architecture, said that she designed the amphitheater for her thesis project.

She said she chose the materials to make the amphitheater look natural, and that with the right mixture it can withstand wind, rain and considerable stress.

"It's a big misnomer that you can walk right up to it and pick away at it," she said. "They build whole houses and museums and libraries out of it, so it's very durable."

Part of the plan for the amphitheater is to have picnic tables along the hillside beyond the seats, surrounded by more rammed-earth walls four feet high to stop the wind. It would face southwest, inside the walking-trail loop north of the pool and the new playground and just west of

a gully that drains through there. Water could drain through dry-laid stone and brick around the stage and into a perforated pipe under the structure.

The materials for the amphitheater would probably cost \$65,000, Hayes said, and the whole building would probably cost twice that to build.

"If you build it," Carmichael said, "they will come."

See "PLAN," Page 2

Exchange snub could be costly for businesses

WASHINGTON (AP) - Rejecting the Medicaid expansion in the federal health care law could have unexpected consequences for states - like Kansas - where Republicans remain steadfastly opposed to what they scorn as "Obamacare."

It could mean exposing businesses to Internal Revenue Service penalties and leaving low-income citizens unable to afford coverage even as legal immigrants get financial aid for their premiums. For the poorest people, it could virtually guarantee they remain uninsured and dependent on the emergency room at rural hospitals that already face federal cutbacks.

Concern about such consequences helped forge a deal in Arkansas last week. The Republican-controlled Legislature endorsed a plan by Democratic Gov. Mike Beebe to accept additional

Medicaid money under the federal law, but use the new dollars to buy private insurance for eligible residents.

One of the main arguments for the private option was that it would help businesses avoid tax penalties.

The Obama administration hasn't signed off on the Arkansas deal, and it's unclear how many other states will use it as a model. But it reflects a pragmatic streak in American politics that's still the exception in the polarized health care debate.

"The biggest lesson out of Arkansas is not so much the exact structure of what they are doing," said Alan Weil, executive director of the nonpartisan National Academy for State Health Policy. "Part of it is just a message of creativity,

See "HEALTH," Page 2

School leaders train for worst

By Sam Dieter
Colby Free Press
sideter@nwkansas.com

The Colby School Board heard a report about safety in an emergency at its meeting last Monday from three administrators who attended a training session held in Scott City earlier this month.

Athletic Director Larry Gabel, Elementary Principal Lance Kranawitter and Middle School Principal Rob Ross went to an emergency operations class April 2 in Scott City, learning how to handle everything from a tornado to a school shooting.

Ross said the thinking about these emergencies has changed. In the past, for instance, law enforcement officers tried to contain school shooters. Now they try to stop them as quickly as possible, rather than just detain them, since many shooters do not plan to

survive their own attacks.

"Basically the idea is they want to minimize damage as much as possible," Ross said.

It's no longer recommended that schools use reports such as "code grey," which no one understands. Students should go to the nearest room when there is a lockdown, he said, not necessarily the room they were assigned to.

Ross added that local entities are being advised to plan differently for an emergency.

"Everybody needs to know what's going on," he said.

Colby Community College, for instance, might need to borrow school district buses if it has an emergency. First responders might include emergency medical technicians and law enforcement, but that might be everyone from the sheriff to the game warden and

See "SCHOOL," Page 2

City, foundation want to buy passes

The Thomas County Community Foundation is seeking donations for a fund that provides passes to the Colby Aquatic Park for children who receive free- and reduced-price lunches at county schools.

City Manager Tyson McGreer said a 10-day kid's pass normally costs \$25. The free passes will be distributed by McGreer's office beginning May 15, said Melinda Olson, foundation executive director. To apply, parents should submit a letter from their child's school showing eligibility for lunch benefits.

Priority will be given to children who receive free lunches,

Olson said, with any remaining money used to provide passes for kids who receive reduced-price lunches. If there are more applicants than money available, a random drawing will determine who gets them.

"This pass-through fund is still very small, but the thought behind it is large," said Olson. The goal is "to help all children in Thomas County be able to enjoy our wonderful aquatic park."

Donations can be sent to 350 S. Range Ave, Suite 14, Colby, Kan. 67701. Donors should specify the money is for the pool passes. Contact Olson at 460-9152 or tccf@st-tel.net with questions.



Artwalk fills sidewalk

Robin Delzeit made balloon animals (above) Friday evening at the annual spring Art Walk in downtown Colby, organized by the Colby Community College art department. Nearly two dozen businesses participated, including the Movement Connection, where two girls (left) looked at one of the paintings on display and Sunflower Bank, where this girl (right) showed off her temporary tattoo. Heather Flohrshutz (below), a student from California, played the electric guitar along Franklin (below), case open for tips. The crowd was estimated at double last year's 800.

EVAN BARNUM (left, above) and SAM DIETER (right, below) Colby Free Press



Governor says to celebrate end of Capitol revamp

TOPEKA (AP) - Gov. Sam Brownback says he's hoping Kansas will have a charity ball at the Statehouse when the building's \$332 million, 12-year renovation is complete.

Brownback says his office is working on plans for such an event early next year, but any discussions so far are tentative.

But the governor told reporters at a tree-planting on the Statehouse grounds last week that he's looking forward the end of the renovation.

It began in 2001 and is supposed to be done by the end of this year. The project has included improvements to

offices, meeting rooms and mechanical systems, the addition of an underground parking garage and expansion of the basement for new offices.

