



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## School days are just around the corner



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Raudel Mercado, 14, (left), his brother Jorge, 17 and mom Maria Ornelas sat down with Kathy Vaughn, the after school coordinator for the Colby School District at the district's registration Wednesday in the high school cafeteria.

## Thunder signals rain, flood risks

A brief thunderstorm hit Colby late Wednesday night, dropping less than an inch of rain, but more rain was reported west and south of town, and flooding was expected tonight and tomorrow along the Smoky Hill River in Logan and Wallace counties.

The rain in Colby started falling after dark, and despite some loud thunder, the National Weather Service measured only half an inch of rain near town. A total of .88 of an inch fell about four miles west of Brewster, .84 about four miles west of Oakley and .87 near Winona.

More thunderstorms are possible until Friday, with a 60 percent chance for heavy rain tonight, but skies should clear up by Saturday. A bigger problem may be flooding expected further south.

With more rain expected, the service issued a flash flood watch for Logan, Gove and eastern Wallace counties until 4 p.m. today.

A tributary of the Smoky Hill flooded U.S. 40 a mile east of the Wallace-Logan county line near Winona this morning.

Later, the service issued a flood warning for the Smoky Hill from Wallace County through Logan and Gove for Friday morning and through Friday night. The river was at 5.9 feet south of Oakley this morning and was expected to crest at 9.5 feet by early Friday afternoon. Flood state is 9 feet, the service said, and minor flooding is expected.

The river should fall below flood stage by Friday afternoon, the service said. The warning predicted extensive flooding of fields and pasture land, with some roads possibly under water.

The service cautioned people not to drive into running flood water, even if it appears shallow. Most flood deaths occur in vehicles, it said, and it takes only about a foot of water to float a car.

## Senator speaks to Rotary on Congress

By Heather Alwin

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Rotarians and their guests gathered Tuesday to hear from Sen. Jerry Moran, a fellow Rotarian. Moran holds the seat formerly occupied by Bob Dole, Sheila Frahm and Gov. Sam Brownback.

Guests at the luncheon included state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, state Rep. Ward Cassidy and Frahm, along with many members of Colby and Thomas County government.

"Politicians get stuck at the head table because nobody wants to sit with us," he joked, referring to his table-mates Ostmeyer and Cassidy.

Moran laughed about walking to the meeting, held at Colby Community College, in his suit and tie from the KXXX studios where he had just completed a radio interview. His daughter and her boyfriend, on the trip with him, had taken his vehicle to surprise her boyfriend's Atwood family.

Moran said Congress is currently on recess, but he does not consider the recess a vacation. Instead, he is meeting with constituents statewide, "getting a dose of what I call Kansas common sense and good judgment," he said.

While it is often a good thing for Congress to be out of session, he said, "the right Congress meeting would be a good thing because there are lots of things we ought to be trying to undo."

Moran said some of his main goals are ensuring that the rural, Kansas way of life continues. For example, he said, he wants to encourage rural health care so that younger Kansans can live in small communities without fear that their families will be endangered by the distance to medical care.

"We live our lives in rural America – in places like

Brewster, Colby, Atwood – in a pretty special way," he said.

"The greatest challenge we face now is the federal deficit," he said. "At some point in time, those who lend us money will decide we are no longer credit-worthy."

Moran said only about 30 percent of federal spending is actually appropriated by Congress, with the remaining spending going toward mandatory programs like social security.

He said 42 cents of every dollar spent in Washington is borrowed.

After his comments, Moran opened the floor for questions.

Jeff Horlacher told Moran that, in his view, "if it's too big to fail, it's too big," and asked Moran what Congress is doing to curtail large businesses.

Moran did not directly answer Horlacher's question, but said the Dodd-Frank Act that was supposed to regulate large financial institutions is broken, doing little to eliminate failure risks of large companies.

Moran said congressmen who voted for the act are largely unwilling to fix it since fixing the act would be admitting it was not well drafted in the first place.

He said some smaller bankers have told him they no longer offer home loans because of the act's onerous regulations. The act is one example of the federal government's "one size fits all" solutions that do not always work well in rural areas.

Moran emphasized that he voted against every bailout proposed by Congress, including those urged by former President George W. Bush.

Melany Wilks asked Moran what the government is doing to help interest rates rise to help retirees and

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HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press

Sen. Jerry Moran (left) talked after the Colby Rotary meeting Tuesday with Jeff Horlacher, Nancy Lapell and Vernon Hurd of Colby.

## Selden youth dies in Wednesday rollover

A 16-year-old Selden youth was killed when the car he was in went out of control and rolled several times Wednesday evening near Prairie View in Phillips County, while the 16-year-old Logan girl who was driving was flown to a Nebraska hospital.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Joseph W. Koerperich, 16, was riding in a 2001 Pontiac Grand Am northbound on West 1300 Road. The driver was Justice R. Bonner, 16, Logan. The car drifted onto the east shoulder at 7:23 p.m. just over two miles south of U.S. 36, or three miles from Prairie

View, the patrol said.

Miss Bonner overcorrected, the report said, and the car went back into the east ditch, where it hit a fence and rolled several times. Both teens were taken to Phillips County Hospital, where Koerperich was pronounced dead.

Miss Bonner was transferred to Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, Neb., where she was listed in fair condition in the neurotrauma unit just after noon today.

Koerperich would have been a junior at Golden Plains High School in Rexford this fall.

## City Council passes budget

By Sam Dieter

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The Colby City Council approved its budget for next year at its Tuesday night meeting.

A public hearing for the \$20,854,882 budget was opened and closed after no one from the public showed up to comment. The council members then approved the budget with no revisions or discussion. They had already worked on the budget at their last meeting and at a planning session last month.

The city is planning to raise \$1,483,166 this year by increasing the tax levy to 33.277 mills. It was 33.205 mills in 2012 and 2011. That comes to \$91,450 more than

it taxed last year, when it raised \$1,391,715, a slight jump from \$1,374,423 in the 2011-2012 budget year. The total city budget was \$20,208,022 last year.

The council had to approve an ordinance attesting to the tax increase before it approved the budget. Other funding for the city will come from sources like fines, revenue from rental of city services and gifts from other government entities.

The city will spend \$6,637,981 in its electric utility fund, \$1,259,078 in water utility, \$1,274,314, in sewage disposal utility and \$735,796 in solid waste disposal utility. That comes to \$9,907,171, slightly less than the \$9,977,713 it spent last year.

This year, \$10,826,503 will go

into other funds for the city, up from \$9,869,748 last year. Out of the bigger expenses, the city will spend \$2,844,292 in its general fund, \$1,338,803 in its bond and interest, \$1,177,766 on employee benefits, \$2,065,161 on its economic development fund, and \$1,083,930 on its financed projects fund.

Several departments presented their budgets individually. Library Director Melanie Wilks said that the tax rate to fund the library has gone up to five mills this year. City Manager Tyson McGreer presented the recreation department's budget for Stacy Jasper, the departing city recreation director. He said the department plans to spend only \$10,000 for maintenance on the ballfields this year, as opposed

to \$15,000 in past years.

The city also approved its five-year capital improvement fund, which includes both the numbers from this year's budget and ballpark figures for what the city could spend next year.

Some of the larger funds in the plan include the street department, which will get \$177,750 this year. The plan calls for \$318,750 next year, \$296,250 in 2016, \$291,250 in 2017, and \$290,000 in 2018.

The election production department will spend \$333,500 this year, and plans to spend \$438,500

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