



# Priorities of college trustees itemized

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkansas.com

Colby Community College trustees decided to send a list of fund-raising needs to the college's Endowment Foundation at their regular meeting Monday night.

The first item on the list, and the college's highest priority, is to increase cash reserves to the college will with \$2 million in cash beyond its normal operating costs.

"The least sexy thing you can do is ask people to

pay bills," said College President Dr. Stephen Vacik, "but that also becomes your most important area."

"That needs to be in bold, so they can't go, 'we didn't see that,'" Trustee Linda Vaughn said, as her fellow trustees laughed.

Board President Arlen Leiker got the OK to take the list to Foundation President Jay Todd and Executive Director Nick Wells.

The college divided the rest of its requests into short-, medium- and long-term projects, but Trustee Dale Herschberger pointed out that the foundation does not need to complete these in order.

The short-term projects, to be completed within

three years, include a \$30,000 repair to a dorm roof, a \$25,000 dorm renovation, a \$65,000 farm tractor, \$40,000 for two minivans (one van broke down in eastern Colorado this weekend) and new signs around the college for \$50,000.

Medium-term projects, to be done in three to seven years, include a \$3 million residence hall remodel, \$1 million student union upgrade, \$513,000 parking lot renovation and \$100,000 for cattle pens.

Finally, long-term projects include a \$3 million wellness and wrestling facility renovation, a \$500,000 horse-arena renovation. The biggest long-term project, a new residence hall, would cost be-

tween \$10 million and \$12 million.

The board agreed the college should come up with the list at a special meeting Oct. 28. That meeting grew out of a suggestion from Trustee Audrey Hines that the college should have its own fund-raising arm similar the foundation. Several foundation board members sat in on the Oct. 28 meeting, including Wells and Todd.

Wells, who was at Monday's meeting, told the trustees that the college stands to gain half of its cash-reserve goal from now until the end of December.

See "TRUSTEES," Page 2



# Snow day holds out chilly thrills

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Colby Grade School second graders pointed to each other Tuesday evening (top) as they compared their plans for what to do during a snow day. Students and teachers alike were happy to hear newscasters Brody McGreer (left, at right), Shea Bowers and Ana Freeman predict cold weather the next day at the start of the musical "The Big Chill." Percussionists Caitlin Behring (below left), Kadyn Nelson, Coleman Luidahl and Collin Covell accompanied the group during one song.



# More foster homes needed

Thomas County needs more emergency and respite foster care homes, says Vicki Cain, recruitment manager for Saint Francis Community Services.

At a Thomas County Healthy Communities Coalition meeting last Thursday, Cain encouraged members to support foster care in north-west Kansas and consider opening their own home to foster children.

"We still don't have enough beds in foster homes," she said.

Twelve Thomas County kids are in foster care, said Cain, but 10 of those 12 had to be placed outside the county because there are not enough licensed foster homes here.

The greatest local need, she said, is for temporary homes for respite care and police protective custody. This type of care requires flexibility when the foster parent gets a short-notice call that a child needs help.

Cain said the area needs five more foster homes to avoid moving kids outside of the community. It is usually in the child's best interests to stay near home, where he or she can maintain connections to a familiar school or day-care providers.

"What we're looking for today is solutions to this situation," she said.

She added that she was at the meeting at the suggestion of Thomas County Attorney Kevin Berens, whose office handles the legal side of foster placement.

"I don't think people realize how often law enforcement has to take kids and there are no local foster homes to place them in," said Michelle Morris, legal assistant for the county attorney's office.

For information, contact Marla Baumann at Saint Francis in Kensington, (785) 476-3234.

# Financial aid troubles noted

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkansas.com

At their monthly meeting Monday, Colby Community College President Steve Vacik explained to college trustees how the school distributes financial aid, scholarships and bills to its students.

A Colby Free Press article about the foundation board's meeting Thursday reported complaints from parents and alumni that students had neither been billed or received financial aid this fall.

Accounting firm Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball reported after an audit for the foundation that 15 percent of the scholarships which the foundation paid for had gone to students who did not have the right qualifications they received. After hearing the result of the audit on Thursday, the foundation board voted to send checks for its scholarships directly to each student, and not just give the money to the college.

"That is a bigger number than what we've had," foundation Executive Director Nick Wells told the trustees, "but it's not a new deal."

He also pointed out that the scholarships had been awarded in September, and said that the college should give them out in March as an incentive for students to go to school in Colby, not after they've already decided.

Vacik called on Brittney Squire, administrative assistant to the vice president of student affairs, to explain the scholarship process to the trustees.

Squire, who has worked with student scholarships for the last two years, said the large majority of scholarships given out through the school are given out in late September or early October. Workers at the college try to match these scholarships as best as they can with funds from the endowment foundation, one fund to one scholarship.

Most of the scholarships are based on a student's major and grade average, she said, pointing

out that students change their majors often, and their grade average can fluctuate.

The college has an internal audit each year with Adams, Brown, she said. She said the accounting firm told them this year that they need to improve their communication, but were not doing anything in bad faith, Squire said. She said her understanding was that the report was the same this year.

Vacik then explained the cause of the college's financial-aid woes.

Normally, the college would give out student bills right away, he said, but "our entire financial aid department was wiped out in July."

Vacik contested a claim Wells made Thursday that 64 college employees have changed in the last few years, saying that some of those were part-time positions.

After the meeting, college Public Information Director Debbie Schwanke reviewed Wells' list of positions that have changed, and found that 23 full-time salaried employees resigned in the last two years.

Out of the three-person financial-aid department, Schwanke said, only two people have been replaced so far, but the college hired a consultant to get its financial aid department back on track.

The college also was delayed by 3 1/2 to four weeks in processing federal student aid in October, Vacik said, because of a defective computer file the college got from the federal government.

Schwanke said that the college waits on sending out paper bills until all the financial aid and other money due to the students has been processed, so that students know what it is they owe. When the first financial statements for the fall were sent to students about three weeks ago, she said, they about two weeks late already.

Vacik pointed out that students could see their accounts online the whole time.

"I just felt that it was important to explain that to you as my board, so you know that," he told the trustees.

# Parade theme 'Toys and Joys'

The 16th Annual Colby Christmas Light Parade will begin at 5:45 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8, with the theme "Toys and Joys."

The parade route begins at Second Street and Franklin Avenue. As in years past, Santa will lead the way through downtown to Santa City in Fike Park.

Brette Hankin, new executive director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, said she hopes many participants will make it another successful event this year. Businesses, organizations and individuals may enter until the deadline on Friday, Dec. 6.

Prizes will be awarded for categories including businesses and organizations, best decorated vehicle, best religious entry, most unique entry and best representation of the theme. First prize will receive a \$50 Chamber gift certificate.

Registration forms are available at the Chamber office at 350 S. Range, Suite 10, or by calling 460-3401, Hankin said. Santa City will be open after the parade.

"If you haven't yet made it to the Christmas Light Parade," said Hankin, "make this the year you do. It's great fun for the entire family."