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Boxing up Christmas



Sam Dieter/Colby Free Press
Kailey Shields (above, left) and other volunteers kept canned goods stocked around the sides of the room Friday night at the 4-H building while community members went around filling up boxes. Kailey, 12, (left) kept busy breaking down empty boxes as volunteers packed Christmas boxes for Genesis-Thomas County. Norm Hansen (left, below) kept his table stocked while Jessica Kistler and her son Joshua, 4, loaded a box of food meant to provide Christmas dinner for a needy family.



U.S. 36 chase ends in cornfield

An eastern Kansas man and his dog were tracked down in a Rawlins County corn field by the pilot of a Highway Patrol airplane Friday morning after he led officers on a short car chase. A passenger bailed out of the car and waited for police.

Ivan Holmes III, 30, was spotted by a Kansas Highway Patrol pilot, said Trooper Tod Hileman, public information officer for the patrol's troop D in Hays. Hileman said the man had been stopped for a seat-belt violation at 9:54 a.m. on the west side of Atwood. A passenger and a dog that was riding with them were also taken into custody.

"During the stop, the trooper noticed personal-use marijuana inside the vehicle," Hileman said. "After he spotted it and pointed it out to the driver, the driver fled." Holmes, who had already just given the trooper his driver's license, sped east on U.S. 36 in the rented Chrysler 200. Officers chased him six miles east of Atwood along the highway and then into a corn field. During the chase, officers reported that one of the occupants tossed something out of the car. That afternoon, however, Hileman said the only contraband found after the chase was the marijuana spotted in the car.

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Live Nativity just beginning

By Heather Alwin
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This weekend, everyone can enjoy a live nativity presentation at Jane Johnson's home, a tradition Johnson says she hopes to continue every year.

The production, set for 4 to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday at 2626 Highway 25 north of Colby, features the players of a Christmas scene along with live animals.

Johnson said she invites visitors into her home, too, for cider, cookies and fellowship.

The live nativity, she said, was inspired by the death of her husband, Theron, last year. Johnson said she was driving to Denver last year, having a "pity party" and feeling too sad to celebrate the Christmas season.

She turned on Christmas music and decided to force herself out of her misery by finding something to do for others.

On her trip, she heard a radio news story about nativity displays being taken down in public

places. That made her think about how living nativities on private land could not be forced to close, she said. Johnson said she decided then that she wanted to create a living nativity on her land.

While in Denver, she visited a shop near her doctor's office, purchasing costumes for the display. When she got back to Colby, she set her plan in motion. With help from friends and the staff, she organized the display.

That year, Johnson said, she welcomed about 2,000 people.

Though the event is free, she takes donations for Genesis-Thomas County food bank, raising about \$1,300 last year.

Johnson said she received encouragement and support to continue the display this year. Some folks have told her they want to make the nativity part of their annual Christmas tradition.

Volunteers staff the scene, help with setup and provide cookies, Johnson said. Call her Johnson at 443-1525 for information or to volunteer.

Program about women and ag

Kansas professor Joyce Thierer will present "Our Food, Our Land," a program of the Kansas Humanities Council's "The Way We Worked" speakers bureau, at noon on Thursday, Dec. 19, at the Prairie Museum of Art and History.

The presentation is part of *Food for Thought*, a series offered the third Thursday of each month from November to March. Bring a friend, and enjoy a free lunch and an informative presentation.

Thierer will explore the role of women in Kansas agriculture, from native women using bison-scapula hoes to modern farm girls with ethanol-powered, satellite-controlled, robotic drones.

A professor of history at Emporia State University, Thierer splits her time between teaching and Ride into History, a historical performance touring troupe. She specializes in the history of the American West, with an emphasis on rural women's lives in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

"As a fifth-generation Flint Hills rural Kansan," she said, "I wish to engage folk in a lively discussion about the many changes over the last 150 years as we have sought to feed ourselves."

Anyone who'd like to sponsor lunch for a Food for Thought program, an individual, civic group or business, should call the museum at (785) 460-4590.



Joyce Thierer

Renovated building finally goes on market

By Sam Dieter
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A plan to put state offices in Colby now seems to be dead after the city decided to put the building they would have been housed in up for sale.

"It never was official," said Mayor Gary Adrian. "They were just talking about it."

Two years ago, it seemed as if the old Embark Health building downtown might become an office for as many as 75 state employees. But the state, which Adrian said owns two thirds of the office space in the building, gave Colby the OK to put it up for sale instead.

City Manager Tyson McGreer said he has not heard of any plans to put the offices elsewhere in town. Noting that he was not working here when Colby and the state first planned the office, he

said the sale of the building is a "good indication" that there will not be an office here.

"There was never a plan," said state Rep. Ward Cassidy, "it was a discussion like it would be a nice thing to have happen, well I wish it would."

He remembered the governor talking about it in his first year in office. He said Steve Anderson, former state budget director for the governor, was suggesting having an office in this part of the state.

At its last meeting on Dec. 3, the Colby City Council considered a new agreement with Stock Realty and Auction to sell the building. They did not approve the terms of the agreement, but talked about putting the building at 455 N. Franklin Ave. up for sale for six months with an asking price of \$200,000.

"The bottom line is that I don't think they and anybody that really

wanted to move out here," Cassidy said.

Molly Oliver, the Stock agent in charge of selling the building, said it was first listed in May 2011. She went to the City Council just before the listing expired a year later and to asked them to extend it. But they turned down her request, and the city had not put the building back on market until now.

The city bought the building for \$210,000 at a public auction in November 2010 at the request of the Kansas Department of Housing and Commerce. The department had a \$200,000 mortgage on the building and wanted the city to step in and protect its interests.

Embark Health, a Florida-based end-of-life services company, opened a call center in the downtown building with money from both the city and the state at the start of February 2010. Embark

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