

# County consultant impressed with homes

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP  
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A consultant hired to do a nursing home study by county commissioners at their Nov. 13 meeting has made his first visit, and he says his first impressions were good.

John Grace, who's firm, the Grace Team, is based in Topeka, said he is still in the first stage of gathering information on how Decatur County takes care of its elderly, but was impressed with the open minds and tenacity of the people and staff.

"Well, I guess first of all, there seems to be a new energy at the hospital with the new management and physician, and a rebuilding, it appears, on their hospital system, services and reaching out," he said at the end his second day here, "and the nursing facility, there you have an organization that's been around for 50 years, and in a very old building, but they've done a pretty good job of keeping up repairs and things.

"The other thing is that I'm seeing

a lot of openness on the part of the staffs about the changes occurring in the health-care sector, and the need for being able to respond in a different way than in the past."

Mr. Grace said that he started his visit Dec. 20 by touring and meeting with the staffs at the Decatur County Hospital, Cedar Living Center, Good Samaritan Center and Wheat Ridge Terrace senior apartments. He said so far, he's gathered census and financial information from the facilities from the past five years, as well as taking notes on how the centers operate and where the residents come from.

"It's been a helpful and informative (trip)," he said, "so I'll take all this information now and digest it, and come back and do some meetings with groups like the hospital board and the advisory board at the Good Samaritan. I'll talk to the folks at the senior center, home health staff, county Health Department, the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development commit-

tee and other people, like ministers, too.

"I'm still in the process of gathering information and listening. I'm somewhere still in this stage, and the next step will be analysis, where I'll try to look at what is being provided to the elderly and where the gaps are, and what would be the different scenarios that might be possible for the future. I'm keeping an open mind about all of that."

Mr. Grace said that he will likely be back for a few more visits before the study is done, but should have a good idea of how his recommendations are shaping up by March.

"I'm trying very hard to keep the process open," he said, "and I guess very collaborative, while also trying to build education along the way and support for whatever the community chooses. It won't be me making the decisions. It will be me making suggestions, and it will need to be something the community embraces, discusses and chooses on."

# College raises all tuition

By KAYLA CORNETT  
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Pressed to pay their bills, the Colby Community College trustees agreed to increase tuition for all students beginning this fall as one way to help ease the college's money problems.

President Stephen Vacik said it's almost time for students to decide where they're going to college and he wants to give them good information about tuition.

"We don't want to wait on tuition until it's too late and they've already made their decisions," he said.

So, Dr. Vacik said at a meeting Dec. 14, the administrative team sat down and talked about what to do and determined that it was time to raise tuition fees. He reminded the board the college didn't raise tuition or general fees at all last year.

"Our revenue, as you know, has been not as strong as we would've liked given our expenditures," Dr. Vacik said, "and in order to help that ... we propose to raise the tuition..."

He proposed raising tuition \$3 per credit hour for in-state students, \$4 for students from border states, \$5 for other out-of-state students and \$6 for international students.

He said they have involved the people of the area and have asked others to take part in improving the college's cash situation, but it has come to asking their students to step up and do their share.

He added that the majority, if not all, of Colby's competitors are raising their tuition next year as well, so the increase is not out of line.

"We're going to be competitive," Dr. Vacik said. "We might not be the lowest, but we'll be competitive and again, given our financial situation, we have to be very careful with this

kind of thing."

Chairman Arlen Leiker asked if enough work has been done to show how much the budget will increase next year. Dr. Vacik said they haven't worked on the budget yet, but said there's a good chance that state money may be cut and expenses will continue to grow.

"So I think as we look at revenues," he said, "I think we need to go ahead and be active about this, not reactive."

The trustees passed the tuition increase unanimously.

In other business, the board:

- Amended the agenda to pull an agreement with Salt Lake Community College from the consent agenda and add it as a business item, to insert a business item for Lou Hines to speak to the board and to add a closed session for attorney/client privilege to discuss negotiations.

- Approved the consent agenda after some questions. Trustee Cindy Black asked why some contracts dating back to February weren't being approved until now. Lisa Failla, administrative assistant to the president, said a couple of them were for adjunct instructors, part-time teachers hired on contract. These contracts, Failla said, are sent to the employees, who send them back. Failla said they had just received those contracts back.

Trustee Dale Herschberger then asked about a bill from Tubbs and Sons for transporting a car from Texas. Alan Waites, chief financial officer and vice president of business affairs, said it was a relocation expense for Dr. Xuemei Yang, dean of institutional effectiveness.

- Tabled two resignations due to concerns with wording which would need to be discussed in a

closed session.

- Tabled bids for dining services from Chartwells Higher Education Dining Services and Great Western Dining Service Inc. Dr. Keegan Nichols, vice president of student affairs and marketing, said the current contract with Chartwells isn't up until July, so Black asked to table the bids so the trustees could read through both contracts. Board attorney John Gatz said he hadn't reviewed the contracts yet either.

- Approved an agreement on solar energy training, pending Mr. Gatz' approval, with the Utah college for the second phase of a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. Dr. Vacik said it was pretty much the same agreement the board approved previously, but appendices had been left out of the original agreement, and Mr. Gatz didn't have an opportunity to read all of that beforehand.

Barry Kaaz, dean of external affairs, said Phase 1 was in 2010 when Colby College received \$4,000 to provide solar photovoltaic training in Colorado. This contract, he said, covers the money the college received in Phase 1, but Salt Lake gave them the money without the contract.

Mr. Kaaz said this money comes from a fund Salt Lake has from the U.S. Department of Energy and Colby draws from that fund. There will be two more phases, he said, with Phase 3 beginning in July, and Colby is the only community college in the state that has taken the initiative to get this grant. Mr. Kaaz said so far, the grant has paid for equipment, solar photovoltaic cells, the college's wind turbine and training in 2010 and this year.



## Shop at home

DESPITE THE COLD, people came out for some last-minute Christmas shopping on Saturday, Dec. 22. Roland and Pam May (above) were peeking into Ray Jewelry, while others checked out items like the decorations at Stanley Hardware (left). -Photos by Stephanie DeCamp

# Thomas County gives college advance payment to pay bills

By CHRISTINA BERINGER  
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Thomas County Treasurer Donita Applebury told commissioners Monday that she'd be issuing a \$600,000 advance distribution for property taxes to Colby Community College after receiving a letter outlining the need.

Under Kansas law, she said, the treasurer can decide whether to fulfill such a request and does not need approval from commissioners.

The three-sentence letter from Chief Financial Officer Alan Waites last Wednesday made a formal request for the money. No representative from the college came to the meeting.

"The college does not have adequate cash, reserves or investments to cover operational cash requirements this month without this early distribution," Mr. Waites wrote.

He has been monitoring the college's cash flow all fall, reporting to college trustees each month. The college usually has cash problems toward the end of the year, then recovers in January when it gets its first big tax payment and students pay tuition for the second

semester. By law, the college is required to submit its request in writing, Mrs. Applebury said, and it can ask for up to the amount of taxes actually owed.

"We are honoring their statement of need and taking their word for it," the treasurer added. "Based on the law, this is in violation, but the auditors will not write me up because, when Alan called last week, the auditors were out at the college. Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball is the auditor for the college and for the county.

"I later talked to Brian (Staats, a certified public accountant for the firm), who said I can make the advance payment if I want."

The advance was the fourth time an early payment had been issued to the college since December 2010, Waites said. It will come from a distribution scheduled for Jan. 20, when the college will receive the balance. Mrs. Applebury said this is the first of five annual payments to the taxing subdivisions, and the college usually gets about \$1 million in January.

"The first such payment was

issued in December 2010," Mr. Waites said after the meeting, "then again in May 2011 and December 2011. Things got better in May 2012, so the advance was not needed at that time, and we don't anticipate an advance will be needed in May 2013, either.

"Our biggest challenge is the seasonality of cash flow. Our year ends is June 30, and if you take into account the entire fiscal budget year, we are cash neutral or ahead....

"Generally, our income is lower than our expenses during the first six months by a significant amount, so then in November and December, we get into a jam. Without this advance payment, we wouldn't be able to pay our operational and payroll expenses."

This year, Mrs. Applebury said, the college levied taxes to produce \$3,841,132, she said. By Dec. 20, when the first half of property taxes is due, the county will have collected a little over half of an expected total for all funds and units of government of \$14 million. The remaining half of taxes is due May 10, she said.

# College energy project completed

By KAYLA CORNETT  
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The Colby Community College trustees learned at their December meeting that the \$4.5 million Honeywell project was completed the week before.

Account executive Phyllis Baker and project manager Tim Lester said at the meeting Dec. 14 that the project was completed on Dec. 11.

Ms. Baker went through the details of the project, which was a 25-year contract for \$4.5 million. She said they started out by looking at all the mechanical systems on campus for upgrades.

The goal was to reduce energy use and create renewable energy as a way to help increase enrollment.

"The program included operational savings," Ms. Baker said, "as well as guaranteed energy savings."

The guarantee, she said, was that the college's energy bill would be reduced by 25 percent.

If they didn't make that amount,

Ms. Baker said, the company would pay the difference.

She said throughout the campus, they installed 20 conservation measures, including solar panels, the wind turbine, heating and air conditioning upgrades and controls, boilers and building envelope items - roofing, doors, ceiling cracks and internal and external lighting.

Ms. Baker finished by saying the project was completed on schedule with a fixed budget, which means it was done without changing the price, and the firm will come out and check the energy conservation measures to make sure the savings are being met.

She said a report will be given to Barry Kaaz, dean of external affairs, for him to accept or reject.

Trustee Kenton Krehbiel asked when the site visits will begin, and Ms. Baker said they did one in September and there will be another in about six months.

Mr. Kaaz said he is pleased with the results and Mr. Lester thanked

the staff and personnel at the college for working with Honeywell's subcontractors.

Mr. Kaaz, in his report to the board later, said they have closed the Honeywell project out after developing alternative energy at the college farm and a report reviewing the energy savings had been sent to the trustees.

The board members said they appreciated receiving the charts and graphs.

Trustee Dale Herschberger asked about the "DashBoard," which allows anyone to track, monitor and compare electrical and natural gas energy usage on campus, and Mr. Kaaz said it is working and they might be able to use it for some competition on campus.

Trustee Bill Shields asked Mr. Kaaz if this project has freed up time for the maintenance crew to complete other tasks and Mr. Kaaz said it has helped considerably.



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January 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
			Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic		Nuclear Medicine Cardiac Rehab MRI's	
6	7 Dr. Rubinowitz Oncology	8	9 Dr. Frankum Surgery	10 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	11 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	12
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab		Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic		Cardiac Rehab MRI's	
13	14	15 Dr. Frederick C. Miller Cardiology	16 High Plains Cardiologist	17 Kirsten Angel Dietitian	18	19
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab	Mammograms	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic		Nuclear Medicine Cardiac Rehab MRI's	
20	21	22 Dr. Frederick C. Miller Cardiology	23	24	25	26
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab		Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic		Cardiac Rehab MRI'S	
27	28	29	30	31		
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab		Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic		Nuclear Medicine Cardiac Rehab MRI'S	

To schedule an appointment with a visiting physician, PLEASE CALL (785) 626-3211 Cheryl Banister, RN Specialty Clinic Director