



City helps victims

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council again approved giving money to the Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Service in Hays Tuesday.

For the past two years, the council has budgeted \$750 annually to support services provided by the organization, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager. Council approved the same amount for this year.

Thomas County/Colby had 42 victims in 2005, said Becky Vaughn, the organization's advocate. Breaking down the numbers from Thomas County, she said, there were 31 victims of domestic violence and 11 victims of sexual assault.

"Within the 18-county area of northwest Kansas, a total of 513 victims reported being either sexually assaulted or domestic violence victims."

Vaughn spoke about the services provided to women which include a 24-hour, personal and confidential non-judgmental support line, referrals, support groups, counseling, legal, medical and financial assistance and public education.

The organization serves Cheyenne, Gove, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Decatur, Graham, Osborne, Rooks, Sherman, Trego, Ellis, Logan, Phillips, Russell, Smith, Wallace and Thomas counties.

Domestic violence, Vaughn said, "is described in three different stages. In Stage 1, the tension builds with the abuser criticizing every move the victim makes; forcing her to walk on egg shells. Explosive attacks define stage 2, with the abuser either physically, mentally, financially or sexually hurting the victim. Often times, the injured party feels weak and isolated. Stage 3, known as the honeymoon stage, sees the abuser feeling regret for the incident and apologizing. This can either be in the form of gifts or promises that the maltreatment will never happen again."

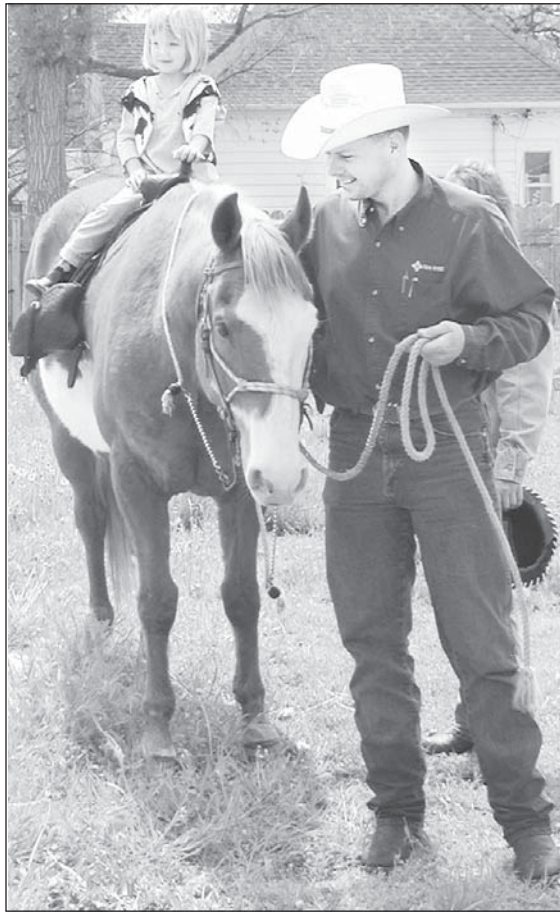
Sexual assault victims can suffer medical complications, emotional detachment, an altered sense of self and post-traumatic stress disorder. Vaughn distributed pamphlets on the Northwest Kansas Sexual Assault Services available through Colby's hospital, Citizens Medical Center. The Orientation Assessment Referral Safety project is a combined effort of the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence.

The sexual assault services at the Colby hospital helps victims through crisis intervention, forensic evidence collection, care of injuries and other related assistance. The services are free and confidential.

Money to support the Hays office is provided by cities and county governments, grants, the United Way of Ellis County and private donations. For questions about the services offered, call toll-free (800) 794-4624; or visit the web site: www.safekansas.com

Anyone wanting to send donations, can write the Hays office at 403 E. 23rd St., Hays, Kan. 67601.

Ride 'em cowgirl



Hank the horse and Scott Brown, right, gave Puddle Duck Preschool student Claire Nelson a ride Thursday. Scott and Shanda Brown brought Hank to the school so students could ride and learn more about horses.

TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Retiring preschool teacher guides students, parents

By John Van Nostrand
Free Press Publisher

Retiring Heartland Christian School preschool teacher Dixie Snyder said she won't really miss the work until school starts in the fall.

But she met the people who already miss her.

A reception for her was held Tuesday at the school. Students, parents and other school officials wished her well. After nine years at Heartland, and 25 years total in education, she said she is ready to be finished. Snyder will retire at the end of the current school year.

"When I was in high school, I always wanted to work in an orphanage," she said. "Since I couldn't find an orphanage, this was the next best thing."

Snyder credited Sandy Squibb for encouraging her to get into early childhood education. Snyder's work in Colby has been diverse, but all related to young children. She spent time in Colby's headstart program and worked with handicapped

preschool students.

Snyder said when children start school it is such a critical time for the child and the parents. Making sure each side is independent of each other, at first, is key. Countless times, Snyder has seen emotional, homesick goodbyes on the first day of school.

"Mom and dad should stay away for two weeks so the child can get settled," she said. "It helps a lot, but I still want those parents interested in their child's education."

What Snyder has also lost count of are the innocent moments with her students. She remembers one day when former Administrator Rick Roberts did not see Snyder when he walked by the room and glanced in. Roberts asked their children where their teacher was and the kids pointed to under the desk. It was Snyder's turn to participate in a lesson that involved the desk.

Snyder said her rule about the exchange of information between students, their parents and herself has been vital.

"I've told parents, 'If you don't



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Heartland Christian School preschool teacher Dixie Snyder, left, talked with children during a reception Tuesday at the school in her honor.

believe everything kids say about me I won't believe everything they say about you."

Heartland Christian School Board member Craig Myers said he has been grateful for what Snyder

Answer is blowing in the wind

Decision on wind farm still unknown

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The future of a proposed wind farm for Thomas County still has not been decided.

Karla Olsen, public information officer with Westar Energy in Wichita, the company involved with the proposal, said they are still evaluating proposals.

"We haven't made a decision," she said. "It's a lengthy process."

Olsen declined to say how many proposals they received.

Cameron Epard of AirStream Energy in Scottsdale, Ariz., gave a presentation on the wind farm at a Thomas County Commissioners meeting in March.

The proposal, which was submitted to Westar Energy, is for a 130-megawatt wind farm between Colby and Mingo. The farm would include 60 to 70 towers to generate electricity.

If the bid is successful, the farm would go online in late 2008. Westar would buy the power. Epard

said AirStream and Westar are still discussing details of the proposal.

"We are waiting for them to review," he said. "We're crossing our fingers that things turn out positive."

Even if the Westar proposal falls through, Cameron said his goal is to have a wind farm in Thomas County.

"We will pursue other opportunities if it does," he said.

He and his brother, Kenton, are from Colby and their parents, Richard and Neva Epard, still farm in Thomas County.

Cameron said he wants to give something back.

"It's a good economic development opportunity for the county," he said. "I want to do something for the community."

Commissioner Ken Christiansen said the wind farm is a positive idea.

"I looked at it as a gift," he said. "The wind blows every day."

"It's clean, renewable and would be an economic boost to the area."

Christiansen said it was his understanding that AirStream would keep after their goal for Thomas County even if they are not successful with Westar.

Goodland loses out

By Tom Betz
Goodland Star News

A Veterans Affairs outreach clinic will be opening in Burlington, Colo., not Goodland or Yuma, Colo., government officials announced Tuesday.

The Denver regional office of the Department of Veterans Affairs said a contract for a community outreach clinic has been awarded to the Burlington hospital. The clinic should open by October.

Ken Baum, former Goodland

American Legion commander, and one of the leaders in the effort to get the clinic here, said the decision was terrible news, but at least Burlington was closer than going to Yuma. Burlington is 35 miles away while Yuma is 112 miles.

"I was afraid it was politics," Baum said. "I feel we did the best we could to get it here. We offered them everything they wanted."

"It is better than not having one. I figured if we didn't get it, the decision would be politics to keep it in Colorado. It is disappointing."

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Tour forecasts near-average wheat harvest

WICHITA (AP) — Kansas will harvest a near-average winter wheat crop this year, thanks to bountiful crops in western Kansas that are expected to offset losses from freeze-damaged fields elsewhere in the state, industry experts said Thursday.

The consensus from the three-day winter wheat tour forecast this season's winter wheat crop at 392.7 million bushels, just slightly below

the 400 million bushels typically harvested in the state known as the nation's breadbasket.

Average yields statewide were forecast at 41 bushels per acre.

"Western Kansas has the potential to have the best wheat harvest they have had in years," said Aaron Harries, a tour participant and representative for the organization Kansas Wheat.

The tour, sponsored by the Wheat

Quality Council, began Tuesday with about 50 industry experts traveling across the state assessing crop conditions.

The annual tour — in its 50th year — draws farmers, grain marketers, bakers, millers and other industry experts.

Its forecast is anticipated each season because it usually is the first industry barometer of the expected size of the Kansas winter wheat

crop.

The government will issue its own forecast May 11.

"It is quite a bit of relief, considering last year's average," Harries said at the end of the tour.

"We are especially happy for the folks in western Kansas that have had so many bad years in a row. Barring any disasters in May, it looks like they are going to have a good year."