



COMBINES IN THE FIELD will be a common sight in the next week or two as farmers and harvest crews hit the fields to bring in the wheat before a storm rolls in. Rodney Bracelin is driving the combine while granddaughter, Hanna Bracelin waits in the tractor for grandpa to dump wheat in the grain cart.

Herald staff photos by Tim Burr

## Harvest begins; first load arrives

By Tim Burr

The first load of the 2014 Cheyenne County wheat harvest has been delivered to a local elevator, and the contest has come to a close.

"There really were a lot of entries this year, and we are very pleased with the contest" said Tim Burr, advertising manager for The Herald and Times.

The first load was delivered to the Wheeler Equity by Bracelin Farms on Sunday afternoon, June 29, with the official time of delivery being 4 p.m.

"Quality looks good, considering it is a first load of harvest," said Dale Weeks, Wheeler Equity manager.

The wheat tested 13.2 moisture, and 62 pounds test weight. The field that the wheat came from is owned by the Wilbur family, and located along Highway 36, near the Prairie Land facility, just east of St. Francis.

"You know, I don't know what it will yield until we get the field done, but it looks OK," said Chris Bracelin, when he delivered the load to the elevator.

There were hundreds of entries in this years contest, Mr. Burr said. Entries ranged from June 18 to July 12. June 30 had the most entries, followed by June 28. June 29, the winning day, had over 30 entries.

Winning this year's contest is Sue Ellen Rethke. She correctly guessed the day of June 29, and guessed 3:50 p.m., missing the exact time by only 10 minutes. Second place went to Rachel Morris, guessing the time at 4:16, missing by 16 minutes. Third place

went to Cara Hunt, who guessed 3:43, 17 minutes off, just getting squeezed out of second place by one minute. Others who were close, but no cigar, were Chris Leibbrandt, who was 28 minutes off, Jana LaBarge and Travis Jensen, were about 90 minutes off, and John Lampe and Arlene Walz, missed by about 2 hours.

The first place winner, Sue Ellen, will receive a prize of \$50 in scrip. Second place, Rachel, receives \$30 in scrip, and Cara receives \$20. Sue Ellen and Cara had entered at the Pizza Hut. Rachel entered at the Equity Snack Stop.

The St. Francis Equity also received their first load of the harvest on Sunday, June 29, around 7 p.m. This load, also delivered by Bracelin Farms, was from a different field near Kenny Bracelin's place. The load tested 12 moisture, and over 60 pounds test weight.

Both Frontier Ag, in Bird City, and Bartlett Grain, in St. Francis, received their first loads on Tuesday. Rod Young delivered wheat from Young Farms to the elevator in Bird City on Tuesday afternoon. "It looks like it has good quality" said Ed Carpenter with Frontier Ag. Wheat from Royce Gienger's farm was the first load delivered to Bartlett elevator in St. Francis. "We're ready to get this harvest started" said Zack Patterson, Bartlett manager. Most of the good ole' boys at the coffee shops believe that harvest will be getting well underway by Friday, July 4.



DALE WEEKS, Wheeler Equity manager, unloads wheat into the pit.

## Woman sentenced to 176 months

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With the courtroom half full, sentencing for Leanna Windell came down after personal statements which were read by Brad Figgins's brother, and Windell made a statement. The prosecution and defense came to a plea deal, and Windell will serve 176 months in prison, with credit for time served.

With Judge Scott Showalter presiding, Windell was present with her court-appointed attorney, Charles Peckham. Assistant Attorneys General Nicole Romine and Jessica Domme were present for the prosecution.

The family of Brad Figgins were allowed to make statements first. His brother, Brook Figgins, stood to read carefully crafted words about his brother. He called Brad his trainer, coach, teacher; said he was always calm, patient and encouraging. He also read a statement from his mother, in which she referred to Brad as a "peacemaker." She went on to say that she was still struggling to deal with the reality of his death, and that her heart still ached for her son. Full of emotion, he could not read his father's statement, and handed it to Judge Showalter to read himself.

After the judge reviewed the victim's statements and photographs, he asked Mr.

Peckham if his client wished to make a statement. She did.

Windell stood to say that after reading and re-reading the statements from Brad's family, she was forced to face the truth of the wake of destruction and horror she had caused. She said she was filled with shame and anguish.

Windell went on to tell the story of how she and Mr. Figgins met. She said when she met him in 1992, she thought he was her "knight in shining armor." The two married, against their family's better judgement, and tried to make things work. After they divorced in 2001, she said Brad remained close with her family. He worked two full time jobs and raised the children so she could get the help she needed for her mental illness.

Windell went on to explain that in 2009 she began attending a new church. The church told her she was healed from her mental illness, and she said that, at the influence of the church, she stopped taking her medicine and using mental health services. She believed God was rebuilding her life.

Six months later, when her symptoms returned, she says was told she did not have enough faith in God by the church members. Windell said there were a lot of major changes happening in her life between 2009 and 2013, one

of them was that Brad was a part of it again. When Brad moved in with her in Bird City, she was kicked out of the church.

Windell told the judge that Brad stood by her side always, trying to support her. However their relationship began a destructive cycle taking them back to the past. She said it was painful and tortuous and they were sliding into a black hole.

The morning of Brad's death, Windell said that she drove herself to the hospital because she was extremely ill and thought she might be possessed by demons.

That evening's events are now known to most of the residents of northwest Kansas. Brad Figgins, 45, was found in the basement of his home the evening of April 3, 2013, with injuries to his head. He was taken by ambulance to the hospital, and later pronounced dead.

Windell said she holds herself completely to blame for Brad's death.

After she finished reading her statement, Judge Showalter addressed the courtroom. He said that there are legislative guidelines determining proper sentencing so that sentences are consistent. In her case, it says 176 months is appropriate. However, he said, in this case he felt it is far too lenient.

Judge Showalter went on to address Windell. He told her that

she blames many yet claims to blame no one. It was her decision not to continue her medical and psychological treatments. It was her actions that ended Brad Figgins's life that evening. Her initial statement was filled with lies and deceit to try to cover up her actions. She alone did these things.

There was an agreement between the prosecution and defense to a sentence of 176 months if Windell pleaded guilty to second degree murder. Judge Showalter said that he would honor that plea deal. Otherwise the case would have to go to trial. He looked at Windell and told her that she will face a judgement one day far greater than today.

Windell was sentenced to 176 months in prison. She will get credit for time served. The maximum good time credit will be 15 percent of her sentence. She does not have the right to expunge her record.

Judge Showalter then looked at the family and friends of Brad Figgins and said he was sorry he could not do more - and impose a longer sentence on Windell. He said as a judge everything he does is about equity, but there is nothing he can do to return Brad Figgins to his family and his children.

"Brad was, in fact, a peacemaker," Judge Showalter told the court.

## Fireworks Event Schedules

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## Bones found in old St. Francis building

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A surprise awaited Clay Zimelman when he purchased the old Upton building. When he was going through it, he discovered a human skeleton. That would be enough to spook anyone and send them running to the police!

As it turns out, the skeleton belonged to a group called the Odd Fellows. The remains were placed in the building and forgot about over time.

The Cheyenne County Sheriff's Department investigated the skeleton and had the Kansas Bureau of Investigation help with the confirmation that it was, in fact, a real human skeleton.

18th century. According to their website, the Odd Fellows continue to exist with nearly 10,000 lodges in 26 different countries. However, interest in the group over the years has decreased, and many lodges have ceased to exist. That is what happened to the St. Francis group of Odd Fellows several years ago.

The fraternal group, whose main goal is to "do good by man," has secret rituals and secret initiation rites that they do not divulge. Apparently, part of that secret includes the use of a human skeleton.

The sheriff's department is in contact with state authorities to insure the remains are dealt with properly. The skeleton will be kept at the sheriff's office until it's final resting place is determined.