



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Colby has presence in Hoisington disaster

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

As many as 30 city blocks were smashed in Saturday's deadly tornado in Hoisington, and officials in the Colby Red Cross office are requesting donations to help with the disaster.

According to Donna Finley, executive director of Thomas County American Red Cross, said the destruction from the tornado "is big."

"If anyone wants to contribute to the disaster fund, the people in Hoisington will need it," she said. "The Colby Booster Club donated T-shirts and coffee mugs, which are on their way to Hoisington with a member of the local Red Cross."

Molly Oliver, disaster instructor, left this morning to assist in teaching others on how to help in areas such as mass care, shelters, and kitchen operations, Finley said. Contributions for disaster relief in Hoisington can be sent in care of the Thomas County American Red Cross, 350 S. Range, Suite 8, Colby, Kan., 67701.

An employee of the Colby Free Press, Leaette Bandy and her husband, Bruce, are in Hoisington to assist her niece, whose home was destroyed by the tornado.

The Associated Press reported today that officials in Hoisington estimated 200 structures were destroyed, another 85 suffered major damage and 200 others had minor damage.

Between 20 to 25 percent of the town's structures are damaged and

// You just can't comprehend; 42 years of your life is gone."

Joyce Tauscher, survivor

nearly every window at Hoisington High School was blown out and its auditorium roof is gone.

Across the street, a strip mall has been gutted, according to reports from the Associated Press. Gone also is the town's only grocery store.

The local Dairy Queen is demolished. Also heavily damaged is the hospital, where a new surgical center opened a week ago. The pharmacy, bank and motel buildings are all in bad shape.

Federal emergency officials were expected today to tally losses and start the process of federal and state emergency assistance. Officials were already saying losses would be in the millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, the same system that brought the tornado also dumped about 5 inches of rain. Water was rising rapidly Sunday and threatening some areas just south of the city limits. Kansas 281 linking Hoisington to Great Bend was closed because of high water.

The one fatality in the tornado was Gerald Tauscher, 69, who didn't go into the basement of his home with his

wife, Joyce, because he believed the warning sirens would sound if a tornado was close. His body was found two hours after the tornado hit, underneath the minivan in their backyard. All that remained of Tauscher's home was the empty basement where Joyce Tauscher took shelter.

On Sunday, she spoke about needing to buy clothes for the funeral of her husband of 42 years. Then, she began sobbing. "You just can't comprehend; 42 years of your life is gone," she said. "I have nothing."

Gov. Bill Graves and Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., toured the most devastated areas Sunday.

"This is a scene that is, unfortunately all too familiar to many of us. We are absolutely struck by the severity of this storm," Graves said. "It is hard to describe how devastated the community is."

A year ago almost to the day, a tornado heavily damaged Parsons in southeast Kansas. Two year ago a tornado killed five people in Haysville and Wichita, the governor noted. And months before that flooding did major damage in Augusta.

Accidents send teens to hospital

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Two rollover accidents in two days kept Thomas County emergency personnel and Citizens Medical Center busy this weekend.

Two Sherman County teens were taken to Citizens Medical Center after a rollover accident about 1 1/2 miles west of Brewster early Saturday morning and a Sharon Springs family was taken to the hospital on Saturday afternoon after a rollover about 10 miles south of Colby on K-25.

According to the Sherman County Sheriff's Office, Teagan Raile, 14, Edson, and Destiny Wing, 15, Goodland, were westbound on Sherman

County Road 66, or Thomas County Road Q, at 1:50 a.m. when Raile's 1996 Ford Taurus slid off the roadway into the north ditch and overturned twice, coming to rest on its wheels.

Deputies said Raile was ejected from the vehicle, and both were taken to the hospital by Thomas County Ambulance. Neither was wearing seatbelts. Both were admitted on Saturday morning.

Wing was released on Saturday morning, but Raile was transferred to Swedish Medical Center in Denver where her condition is listed as serious, but stable.

A second accident south of Colby sent a Sharon Springs teenager to the

Denver hospital also.

According to the Kansas Highway Patrol, 40-year-old Linda Allaman, Sharon Springs was southbound on K-25 about 14 miles south of Colby when she dropped one wheel of her 2000 Chevy off the shoulder, losing control and spinning into the ditch. The car rolled 1 1/2 times.

Allaman and her passengers, 11-year-old Shahree Schwartz, 3-year-old Tyae Allaman and 14-year-old Charity Schwartz were taken to the hospital by Thomas County ambulance.

Charity Schwartz was transferred to Swedish Medical Center on Saturday, where she is listed in fair condition. The others were treated and released.

Putting on a happy face

Tara Powell (left) got her face painted by Christy Gerstner, both of Colby, during the Colby Grade School Carnival, Sunday, at the Community Building. In addition to face painting, there were a variety of games ranging from Plinko and golf to volleyball and ring toss. The event was sponsored by the Parent-Teacher Organization with all proceeds going toward needed items at the school.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

A carpenter and his crosses



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Greg Zanis, carpenter and cross-maker, arrived in Colby on Saturday, with the original 13 Columbine crosses he constructed for those killed on April 20, 1999. Zanis has moved the crosses to 445 locations in 44 different states and they are available for viewing by anyone in the area at South Franklin and Pine. Colby will be the first location, however, where the crosses have stayed for one week. In addition, the crosses will be featured in an upcoming speaking presentation by Jerry Johnston when he arrives in Colby on Sunday. His message, according to sponsors of the event, will be "Why God Allows Tragedy," beginning at 7 p.m., April 29, at the Colby Community Building. Also pictured with Zanis is Judy Epp and Kristi Pollanis, both of Colby. More details on the crosses and crusade will appear this week.

Colby officer gets award of valor

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Colby Police Officer Scott Sitton will receive the Gold Award of Valor in Olathe next month for his quick thinking and actions in what would later be the largest drug-related cash seizure in the state's history at \$3.7 million.

Sitton's recognition was announced recently by Larry Welsh, director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, who also serves as the chairman of the Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police awards committee.

"This gold award recognizes Officer Sitton, along with nine others, for their uncommon valor during an adversarial confrontation," Welsh said. "It is also one of the highest honors that can be given to an officer, second only to the chief's award, which is given when an officer makes the supreme sacrifice of giving his own life in the line of duty or as a direct result of an adversarial action."

Three local law enforcement offi-

cial have received this award in the past. Dean Goodheart of Colby, with the Kansas Highway Patrol, received the Chief's Award in 1996 when he was killed in the line of duty.

In addition, Dan Trail, who had been with the Colby Police Department and later took a position with the Beloit Police Department, was recognized when he died trying to save two children from drowning. The other man, John Teeter, was a former Quad County Task Force officer, who was killed in pursuit of a stolen vehicle. At that time, he was a chief of police in eastern Kansas.

The committee looked at 170 officers nominated for four different awards in 2000, with 72 of those being selected to receive either a bronze award, for achievements above and beyond nor-



Scott Sitton

mal duty; silver award, for action directly contributing to the significant prolonging or actual saving of a life; the gold award, which Sitton received for uncommon valor; or the chief's award, honoring officers like Goodheart, Trail and Teeter, who died in the line of duty.

"This is quite an honor for one of our officers," said Randall Jones, Colby chief of police. "Officer Sitton went through a very traumatic experience out there and he did a good job."

For Sitton, it's a humbling experience to be honored along with so many other officers who have received this kind of award. "This is a real honor for me," he said. He also attributes a lot to his field training officers, Sgt. Kent Dible and Cpl. Tom Leavitt.

"They taught me the right tactics to make sure I go home at night," he said. Prior to accepting a job with the Colby Police Department in August, 1991, Sitton did construction work in Den-

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Briefly

Weather: Nice

Nice pretty much sums up the Colby region's weather picture for the next several days, according to the National Weather Service. Tonight, clear skies, lows 30-35 and southwest winds 5-15 mph. Tuesday, partly sunny, warmer, highs around 70 and northwest winds 5-15 mph. Tuesday night, partly cloudy, lows 35-40. Wednesday, sunny, highs in the 70s. Thursday and Friday, mostly clear, lows in the 40s and highs near 80. Colby's weekend temperatures: highs, Friday 83, Saturday 71 and Sunday 71; lows, Saturday 38, Sunday 39 and this morning 28 (two degrees off the record for the date). There was 0.82 inches of precipitation over the weekend, bringing the month's total to 3.01 inches. The records for April 23: 98 in 1989 and 26 in 1988. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Recital planned Tuesday

Elizabeth Shuman, a senior at Colby High School, will

present a vocal recital at 7:30 p.m., on Tuesday, April 24, at Frahm Theater in the Colby Community College Cultural Arts Center. Also featured at the recital will be Chelsea Gordon, trombone, Rebecca Shuman, oboe, and Jay Stewart, tenor. The event is free and open to everyone with a reception following in the lobby.

Colby man to be honored

Colby Community College will host a reception honoring Max Embree, who has been selected as the 2001 honorary associate degree recipient. The event begins at 3 p.m., Wednesday, April 25, in the multipurpose room located in the student union. Embree's degree will be conferred during commencement exercises on Sunday, May 12.

Teen issues upcoming

The Community Awareness Team will be sponsoring "Teen Issues 2001," from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., Wednesday, for all Colby High School students. Some of the topics, according to organizers, include dating issues, depression,

teen pregnancy, destruction of alcohol and drugs, tragedy of drinking and driving, dealing with stress, discrimination and its effects. Each student will attend three workshops unless a study hall is requested by parents. For questions, call Janet Worthy, 462-8152 or Lesley Wagoner, 465-5300.

Last show of the season Tuesday

SwingDance America will present the last performance for the Western Plains Arts Association season on Tuesday evening, April 24, at 7:30 p.m. in the Hoxie High School Auditorium. Admission to the performance will be by Western Plains Arts Association season passes or tickets will be available at the door \$14 for adults, and \$7 for students.

Special board meeting Tuesday

A special meeting of the Colby Community College Board of Trustees will be held at 5 p.m. Tuesday in the board room of the administration building to discuss negotiations and any other items any member wishes to discuss. The meeting is open to the public.

Volunteer tea planned

Lantern Park Manor will have a Volunteer Appreciation Tea Thursday, April 25, at 3 p.m. All volunteers are welcome.

Garage sale space available

The 4-H Exchange Trip has spaces available for rent in the 4-H building for a huge community garage sale to be held on May 11-12. The 4-H'ers will haul in and out. For information call 462-2974; 462-7860 or 694-2250.

Free physicals planned in May

Colby Medical and Surgical Center, 175 S. Range, will be offering free physicals again this year to students in Thomas County on Monday, May 7. Colby Middle School students are asked to be at the clinic by 5:30 p.m. Colby High School students should arrive by 6:15 p.m. and students from Golden Plains and Brewster are scheduled for 7 p.m. Medical forms should be filled out prior to students taking the physical. Forms will be provided at their specific school.

