



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Thomas County's wheat crop just so-so

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

The winter and early spring brought some much-needed moisture to Thomas County, but local farmers and agronomists aren't overly optimistic about the emerging wheat crop.

Comments ranged from, "It's really bad" from Brewster farmer Ray Crumbaker, to "we have a few fields that look

decent," from Thomas County extension agent Dennis Chandler.

Crumbaker, who farms in far southwest Thomas County, said the crops in his location didn't get as much moisture as farther north and east.

He said many fields are already being adjusted out, with farmers preparing spring crops. Chandler said county-wide, fields were spotty, but "I'm not

ready to give up on the wheat."

"Last year we thought 25 (bushels per acre) would be good," he added, "and some came closer to 40."

The moisture came too late to help some of the wheat. "We planted too late because of the drought conditions last year," said Crumbaker.

Mike Brown, who farms around Levant, agreed, adding, "The early

cold weather also hurt the wheat."

Brown said his wheat looked "okay," but he wasn't overly optimistic.

All three agreed the subsoil moisture was better this year, which will help spring crops, but it came too late to help the wheat as much as hoped.

"Some are planting milo or sunflowers in place of the wheat," said Chan-

dlar. Roger Stockton, area agronomist at the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, also thought the wheat was hurting, but wouldn't discount "a lot of variables."

"It just depends on whose field you're looking at," he said.

According to both Brown and Stockton, the wheat is 2-3 weeks behind, which won't be a problem with a cool,

wet spring, but warm, dry weather could cause the wheat to develop too fast.

"That will give us lower test weights and lighter heads," said Brown.

Stockton said some wheat in the 18-county area of northwest Kansas is being adjusted as low as one bushel. But, he summed the annual wheat lottery up: "It's just not consistent."

Commissioners told Recycling center could get another building

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Recycling Center will be expanding if things go as Lynette Koon of the Thomas County Conservation District hopes.

Koon told the county commissioners at their Monday meeting that she will be submitting a grant application to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment for more than \$100,000, and if approved, the grant will cover the cost of a 100-by-50-foot building on the back of the present recycling center. She hopes to purchase a Bobcat loader, a can crusher, a recycling trailer for the Brewster community, and a cage trailer.

She said Kansas Department of Health and Environment wants to make Colby a hub for regional recycling, and had encouraged her to apply for the grant.

The commissioners also signed a proclamation for Koon declaring April 29-May 6 as Soil and Water Stewardship Week.

In other business:

- Emergency Preparedness coordinator John Lygeros brought a draft copy of a new emergency preparedness manual. He said Fire Rescue Consultants did the review, which must be approved by the Kansas Division of Emergency Management. As soon as the plan is given final approval, he will replace the present emergency preparedness manual.

- Rexford Mayor Bill Dible opened bids for the new fire truck for his community. A bid from Conrad Fire Equipment of Olathe for \$114,990 was rejected. One from Weiss Fire and Safety Equipment of Salina for \$85,950, with an additional \$1,750 for lights, sirens, etc., was accepted. The truck will be paid for partially by a Community Development Grant for \$45,597; and by Rural Fire District No. 4 from tax funds and a grant. Corina Cox of Northwest Kansas Planning and Development of Hill City was present and said the commissioners should formally award the contract on May 14, and she will continue with paperwork.

- Fidelis Millan of Nex-Tech, a Rural Telephone company, brought a proposal to provide long distance calling for the county at a cost of 10 cents per minute. He brought a breakdown of bills from Global Crossing, the present provider, and said Nex-Tech could have saved the county \$357.89 on its December bill.

The commissioners said they were favorably impressed, but wanted to think about it. The commissioners called S&T Telephone of Brewster and asked for a proposal on long distance rates.

- Rosalie Seemann reported on the Silver Haired Legislature, which will meet in October. She said representatives are meeting for discussions before then, and said they have met to coordinate with Southwest Kansas representatives. Northwest Kansas proposes discussion of the following issues: Alternative energy incentives to encourage solar energy, gasohol, etc.; use 30 percent of the tobacco settlement money for services for the elderly. The money will be distributed over 25 years. Although the money was earmarked for children, some of it has already been diverted to the general fund. The money was "earned" by older people; telephone bills made more "user-friendly"; changes in Low Income Energy Assistance Program to benefit more people; and change in design standards for new housing to allow wider doors, recessed lighting and other modifications which would allow handicap access.

- Phil Finley reported he had been attending some meetings in Wichita and Topeka, and there is possibly some economic development potential for the area. But he said that nothing is ready to be announced yet.

- Mark Miller, president of the fair board, brought the rodeo contract with Colby Community College for the commissioners' signature. The terms are the same as last year — \$2,500 for use of the fairgrounds during the school year, and a \$500 damage deposit.

- The commissioners appointed Bill Shields to the fair board.

- They approved a bid of \$425 to install and paint a handrail in the center of the north steps to the courthouse.

- In answer to an inquiry, they reported that the Thomas County Health Department is the collection site for testing for drug and alcohol for Thomas County employees.

- They reported the final payment had been made by ixks, an Internet provider which had borrowed money from Thomas County Economic Development to get started.

- They called Northwest Kansas Planning and Development in Hill City to request more paperwork be done for the McCarty Dairy.

- They reported the tree board will plant two trees at the Thomas County Office Complex.

- Landfill Director Larry Jumper got the green light to get bids for a printer, rather than repairing a malfunctioning printer.

- Sheriff Tom Jones and County Treasurer Donita Applebury reported on progress on the new computer system which was discussed at a previous meeting.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Blake McLemore (left), along with other members of his family were among the groups entertaining at the Chamber dinner Friday night. During one of their songs, the McLemore family solicited the help of Leilani

Thomas, director of Colby Convention and Visitor's Bureau, on the train whistle. Also pictured with Thomas and Blake is Bob McLemore. Not pictured are other family members, Susan and Brandon McLemore.

Chamber's direction outlined at banquet

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Jon Eicher, new president of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, assured members attending last weekend's annual banquet/meeting that the four building blocks put in place by the outgoing administration will play a major role under his leadership.

He identified them as: long-term area promotion plans, one-stop service, an umbrella organization and technological advancements.

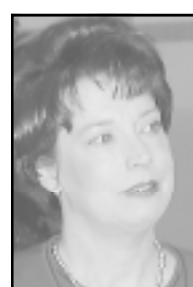
The banquet, held at the Comfort Inn Convention Center, attracted several hundred members who were treated to a fine menu, some outstanding entertainment and witnessed the presentation of several awards.

Eicher discussed each of the four building blocks, as such:

- In the long-term promotion plans, he explained that the organization needs to develop year-round efforts to promote businesses and the people in Thomas County by highlighting distinctive monthly events.

- "We also need to continue the process of investigating the Chamber serving as either an operator or co-operator in having a one-stop service for Northwest Kansas that would serve as a networking center for various social and job services in the area," he said.

- In looking at the proposed umbrella organization, he explained, two



M. Jones



J. Krzycki



P. Peterson



B. Staats

representatives from each of the three boards — Chamber, economic development and convention and visitors bureau — have already met to look at ideas and determine the effectiveness of such an organization.

"The purpose of this 'umbrella organization' would be to insure that all three entities are moving in the same direction with the same ultimate goal and avoid duplication of efforts," he said.

- The area of technology is vital, he said.

- "We realize that to survive as a business community in this day and age, we must strive to be on the forefront of technological advances."

Other goals for the Chamber board include getting more membership involvement in the decision-making by periodic polling and membership opinion surveys.

"We also will continue our 'After 5'

gatherings on an alternate monthly basis to provide opportunities for you (our members) to showcase your business to other chamber members," he said.

Eicher said the survival of the community will, in large part, depend on all members to work toward a common goal.

"With all of us working together," he said, "we'll realize the Chamber's mission, which is to enhance the business climate, improve public image and promote Colby and Thomas County as a great place to live."

The outgoing president, Scott Focke, also spoke about the accomplishments of the Chamber during his administration and introduced the new board members, along with those retiring. New board members installed were Mary Lou Jones, Jeff Krzycki, Pete Peterson and Brian Staats.

Additionally, Focke commended

the significant changes in the by-laws and retiring board member Rod Eisenbise's work in leading one of the largest voter turnouts ever for the Chamber board.

"We had over 130 votes cast for the four new members with eight people seeking one of those four positions," he said.

Other retiring board members were Sharon Dunn, who served as president of the board from 1999-2000.

Dunn had been on the board for eight years. Rich Epp also was thanked for his service on the board during the past three years.

"Last year," Focke said, "I emphasized the importance for our community and the Chamber to embrace and pursue the technology revolution — the Chamber has had an aggressive year in these regards."

Focke added that with this technology, the organization has been able to update its accounting system, introduced new data base systems and, with the help of John Breckenkamp, created a web page that ties inquirers to our businesses and services.

"It has been a great honor to serve as your president over the past year," Focke said.

Recipients of awards presented at the banquet will appear in a later story.

Briefly

Weather: Pull out the sweaters

The National Weather Service has issued a forecast for the Colby region for the next several days that could be termed "sweater weather." Tonight, cloudy, 30 percent chance for thunderstorms, low 40-45 and northeast winds 15-25 mph and gusty. Wednesday, cloudy, 30 percent chance for rain, high in the lower 50s and northeast winds 10-20 mph. Wednesday night, cloudy, 50 percent chance for rain, low 35-40. Thursday, cloudy, rain, high around 50. Monday's high in Colby was 81 and the overnight low this morning was 47. There was no precipitation overnight. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 69 degrees. The records for May 1: 94 in 1928 and 17 in 1909. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Appreciation dinner Thursday

A volunteer appreciation dinner is planned Thursday, May 3, at the Senior Progress Center in Colby. The dinner begins at 5 p.m., and according to Deb Koon, director of the center, those interested should RSVP by noon Thurs-

day. The event is being sponsored by the center and Colby Community College's Office on Aging and open to those age 60 and over. Instructor Larry Koon's sociology class will be cooking and serving the meal. For questions or to RSVP, call 462-2901 (mornings).

Family events continue today

The Greater Northwest Kansas family event will continue today at 7 p.m. at the Colby Community Building featuring Jerry Johnston, speaking on the subject of how to save children and grandchildren from ruin.

His talks will continue at 7 p.m., Wednesday, with a message to husbands and wives on why marriages fail and why they succeed. In addition, Johnston will be speaking to the student body at Colby High School at 9:15 a.m. in the auditorium and at Golden Plains High School in Rexford at 10:30 a.m., Thursday. Everyone is welcome to attend any upcoming event. For questions or information, call Rich Epp, publicity chair, 443-1994 or Jon Jones, 462-3730.

Final book review Wednesday

The final book review of the season is scheduled for

Wednesday beginning at 12:15 p.m. at Pioneer Memorial Library. Debbie Tittel will be reviewing John Grisham's latest best seller which is called *A Painted House*. Everyone is invited to attend this free program and brown bag lunches are welcome.

The Friends of the Library will offer coffee, tea and maybe even a cookie or two, said JoAnne Sunderman, librarian.

Moran here for luncheon

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a special luncheon to host U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran as his guest speaker. The event is scheduled for noon, Saturday, May 5, at the Ramada Inn. Everyone is invited to attend. For information, call 462-3401.

Photo contest planned Wednesday

Pioneer Memorial Library's Friends of the Library is sponsoring a photo contest on Wednesday running from midnight to midnight (beginning after midnight tonight). "A Day in the Life of Thomas County," is the theme of the contest and open to everyone. Those wanting to participate

in this one-day event can pick up a "participant packet" free at Pioneer Memorial Library through May 2.

Film must be returned to the library no later than Saturday, May 5, and the Friends of the Library will be responsible for developing all the film. For questions or information, call 462-4470.

Bicycle rodeo planned Wednesday

Thomas County Health Department will host a bike rodeo from 3:30-5 p.m. Wednesday, May 2, at the Thomas County Office Complex.

The Colby Police Department and the Pirate's Den will be assisting. It is for children currently in grades kindergarten through 6th grade. No training wheels are allowed, and children must have their own bike. To register, call the Thomas county Health Department, 462-4596.

Cardiac Arrest fund-raiser nears

The American Heart Association will hold its annual Cardiac Arrest fund-raising event on Wednesday at the Colby Community Building at 285 E. 5th, from 11 to 1:30 p.m.

