



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Festival attracts 1,000 despite 100 plus temps

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Colby's 11th annual Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass music festival attracted first-timers and returnees alike.

Held at the Thomas County Fairgrounds over the weekend, the event drew a crowd of about 1,000 in spite of 100-degree temperatures.

Jo Booth, with the festival, said last year, about 1,200 people attended. She said the numbers were down because of high gas prices.

There were fewer campers this year, but more people stayed in hotels, Booth said.

Louis and Diane Herrick brought their Hi-Way Diner food stand. It was their first Pickin' on the Plains this weekend. From North Platte, Neb.

"We own a trucking company, and do the diner for fun," Louis said. "It started six years ago, and friends and family help."

They have been to Nebraskaland Days, Comstock rock, car shows and other events. The Herricks had met a member of the Pickin' on the Plains committee and wanted to see what the bluegrass festival was like.

He said the diner, with a 1950s theme, stayed busy Friday and Saturday. Cardboard cutouts of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe greeted customers. Louis said the nostalgic feel is what they hoped for, and it has been popular.

"It's fun to get away from the usual lifestyle," Louis said. He said they spend more time with their family with the diner than anything else.

It originally started when Diane and a friend wanted to serve coffee and bagels at different events. However, that eventually changed to more festive food, such as hot dogs, nachos and funnel cakes.

"The diner's evolution still isn't done, and festival goes will be able



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

A large crowd, above, spilled out from under the shade at the 11th annual Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass festival at the Thomas County Fairgrounds last weekend. **RIGHT:** Sons and Brothers, a bluegrass group from Westcliffe, Colo., took the stage Saturday at the festival. The group was one of 11 that played at the event. Organizers said this is the year that has had the most performers.

to see what changes time will bring," Louis said.

"We had a good time and will probably be back at next year's Pickin' on the Plains."

Though not a first time attendee, Kathy Leitner of Atwood keeps coming back. This year was the fourth festival she and her family attended.

Four years ago, Leitner was taking a class in Colby and was driving by Farmers and Merchants Bank when she saw the dates for the festival on the bank's sign.

"I about wrecked because I didn't know it was here," she said.

She came to the festival and ended up as a volunteer. Leitner has

helped with artwork and other efforts. She also brought other family members. Last year, she and 36 family members had a reunion at the festival.

"I love the music," she said. "It's awesome." The festival has also brought back family memories.

Leitner said her mother's side of the family played bluegrass.

"Part of my childhood has been rekindled," she said. "It makes my heart fly when I hear this music."

It has also prompted her to learn to play guitar, banjo and fiddle.

Her daughter, Sami, and niece Brittany, have both sung at the festival.

"We camp out at the event be-



cause we don't want to miss a thing," Leitner said.

Someone who hasn't missed a festival in its 11 years is Toni McAdams of Colby. She was at the event as a vendor for Mountain Man Nut and Fruit Co.

McAdams remembers when the

first festival was held at Bourquin's Old Depot Restaurant and RV Park.

She said her family was driving past and decided to go when they saw what was going on.

"Everyone brought blankets and chairs," she said. "It was great."

Three years ago, the event moved

to the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

McAdams said the festival has grown each year and this was one of the hotter years.

She keeps coming back, and enjoys listening to the music.

"Even if I wasn't selling anything I would still come," McAdams said.

## Council to ponder credit card payment

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Colby residents could pay utility bills with credit cards if the Colby City Council approves the idea at its meeting 7:30 p.m., Tuesday.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the credit card issue has been researched by employees with no fee charged to the city.

"If the action is approved by the council, a 3 percent or flat \$5.95 convenience fee could be charged to the customer by the credit card company handling the transaction," she said.

In addition, the council will hear what options city officials have come up with regarding gas

service to the new sewer facility when completed.

"We have two options," Armstrong said. The first being a new gas line from U.S. Highway 24 to the facility or sharing a gas line owned by two residents. An airport improvement project bid is expected to be approved, but subject to the Federal Aviation Administration's concurrence. The work is part of the overall plan to continue upgrades at the city's municipal airport.

Council members will also consider approving the route for this year's Nine-Run-Run scheduled Saturday, July 29. The annual event is sponsored by the Thomas County Emergency Medical Services to raise money for ambulance equipment.

## Mumps continues rising across Kansas

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Thomas County is one of 72 counties with a mumps case according to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

In its report last week, the state's health agency stated 814 cases of mumps, an increase of 573 cases since its April report. According to the April release, a total of 241 cases of mumps in 31 Kansas counties were reported.

"Only one case of mumps was reported to the Thomas County Health Department on April 28, 2006," said Juanita Gatz, director.

"The majority of mumps are being reported in Douglas County (south of Lawrence and Topeka)

Only one case of mumps was reported to the Thomas County Health Department . . .

Juanita Gatz, Thomas County Health director



J. Gatz

with the total there at 285," she said.

In Iowa, health officials reported 1,938 cases of mumps as of last week, said Sharon Watson, Kansas Department of Health and Environment in Topeka.

"While the number of Iowa cases is the same as reported on July 1, some new cases have been reported, while others previously reported have since been determined not to be cases."

Gatz and state officials said mumps is usually a relatively mild viral infection. It is transmitted through saliva, coughing, sneezing or being in close contact, within three feet of an infected person, for

an hour.

Some of the symptoms include fever, swelling and tenderness in glands around the neck and jaw. Laboratory tests can be useful in diagnosis, especially if the symptoms are not typical, if a person has been vaccinated, or if they had the disease in the past.

In the event an individual should contract mumps, Gatz said they are considered contagious from three days prior to symptoms appearing to four days following the appearance of symptoms. Mumps can be severe, although this is very rare. Severe cases can result in long-term illness including meningitis, deaf-

ness and sterility in men.

One recommendation fighting mumps is to have two Measles-Mumps-Rubella vaccinations, Gatz said if someone has not received this in their lifetime. Normally, the first vaccination is given in the first year of life.

The second can be given a few months later, but must be given prior to school entry. MMR vaccination is required for kindergarten school entry in Kansas, Watson said.

The best precaution against getting mumps, besides the vaccine, Gatz said, is to use good personal hygiene.

"This means washing your hands before you eat and whenever you may have touched contaminated things," she said. "Because mumps is spread by contact with saliva, you should not share utensils, drinking glasses or other objects."

For questions, contact Gatz at her office at 460-4596 or at the facility at 350 S. Range Ave., in Colby.

## Giddy-up little horsey

Horse-drawn wagon rides were part of the festivities at the 11th annual Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass festival this weekend at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Wilbur Henry of Colby and his horses also gave rides at last year's festival.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

## GOP's primary still volatile to discern trends

TOPEKA (AP) — Republican oddsmakers and railbirds are having a hard time handicapping this year's GOP gubernatorial derby, even with the Aug. 1 primary looming.

Most are reduced to guessing which horses will win, place or show. Speculations frequently conflict.

Jim Barnett has declared himself the leader, and some say he had a big head start that should carry him to victory. Others contend Barnett is fading, likely to finish in third place behind Ken Canfield and Robin Jennison — or vice versa.

Perhaps Canfield has solidified support among conservative, evangelical Christians.

Perhaps he and Barnett will split the conservative vote, allowing Jennison to win.

"It's really hard to tell right now,"

said House Speaker Doug Mays, R-Topeka, who started a campaign for governor last year but dropped out. "I think it's volatile."

Seven Republicans in all are seeking the nomination to challenge first-term Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius in the November general election. Republican activists generally view Barnett, Canfield and Jennison as the most serious contenders.

Barnett, an Emporia physician, is serving his second term in the Kansas Senate.

Jennison, from Healy, is a former House speaker who left the Legislature to promote hunting and previously lobbied for state-owned casinos. Canfield, an Overland Park resident and political newcomer, founded a national institute on fathering in the Kansas City metropolitan area.