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Throwin' to the music



The Gem Lions Club hosted its annual Hog Roast Wednesday with hundreds of people attending at the Gem Community Building in Gem. Bluegrass, folk and country music provided by the Jeff Wagoner Family, Larry Booth and others



EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press

were featured entertainment as people enjoyed dinner, right. In addition to dinner and music, a variety of activities were available to include horseshoes and games for children, left.

Hay catches on fire

By Jan Katz Ackerman

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Spontaneous combustion caused a fire at Thomas County Feeders on Wednesday evening and local fire fighters responded to it.

Fire Chief Bob McLemore said this morning that the internal temperature of 12 hay bales caused them to start on fire. The fire was called in to the Thomas County Sheriff's Office at 6:14 p.m. and the fire department and deputies from the sheriff's office responded to the feedlot which is located 10 miles southeast of Colby on U.S. Highway 83.

"They took a loader and pulled the bales out (of the row)," McLemore said.

The 12 bales that caught fire were among 600 bales waiting to be fed to cattle at the feedlot, Mike Hunter, manager of the feedlot said.

"It could have been a lot worse," Hunter said. "Travis Durham and Andy Blackheart were done feeding and they noticed smoke coming from the stack."

Hunter said before the fire, the pyramid-shaped haystack stood three levels high and was three rows deep on the bottom level, two rows deep in the middle and one row on the top.

"We could have lost several thousand dollars in hay," Hunter said. "They got the bales out really quick, but even after that the hay bales restarted and the fire department got it out."

Thomas County Feeders is owned by Innovative Livestock Services of Great Bend. The haystack is located in a field about one-half mile west of the penned cattle.

Thomas County Extension Agent Clint Milliman said spontaneous combustion can occur when the moisture content of hay exceeds 20 percent and a form of natural gas develops. He said this year's moisture and a shortened summer creates prime conditions for spontaneous combustion.

"With the summer we've had and the rains, the time to harvest is getting shorter and some hay is being put in where it can't breathe," Milliman said.

Some area feedlots are using higher moisture hay as part of their feeding process, which tends to increase the chance of spontaneous combustion, Milliman said. He said there is not much that can be done to reduce the risk of the phenomenon.

"There's not a whole lot they can do," Milliman said. "When they harvest and bring the hay in, depending on their operation and what they need, if the hay is higher in moisture it needs to get air to it."

Milliman said keeping nutrients in the plants is done by keeping the leaves on the plants, which requires harvesting while the moisture is good.

"That's why you'll see farmers haying at night," Milliman said. "They are rushing to keep the moisture in the plants because it gets so dry here so fast."

Hampton Inn plans to locate in Colby

By Jan Katz Ackerman

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A new 64-unit motel is schedule to open by next May near Bosselman Travel Center in Colby.

"After looking at a number of chains, we felt Hampton Inn was a suitable fit for the area and our company," Stephanie King Witt, marketing director for Bosselman's said this morning.

"We are very excited about putting a Hampton Inn next to our travel center there in Colby."

Witt would not speculate on the number of jobs the Hampton Inn would create, but said final num-

“After looking at a number of chains, we felt Hampton Inn was a suitable fit for the area.”
Stephanie King Witt,
marketing director for Bosselman's

bers will be available closer to the opening. The motel will be located just west of the travel center next at County Club Drive and Exit 54 of Interstate 70.

The groundbreaking will take place some time in October, but Witt said the date has not been officially set.

The Hampton Inn will feature a pool, fitness center, and conference room, plus all the amenities of Hampton, Witt said.

She said as an experience guest of the Hampton Inn chain of motels, one of the features she enjoys most is the hot breakfast.

"I think the breakfasts are the

best," Witt said. "And the rooms are comfortable and the beds are cozy."

Besides beds and breakfasts, the Hampton Inn will offer complimentary high-speed Internet access in all guest rooms, a complimentary copy of USA Today®, and signature clock radio and padded lap desk.

The Bosselman Family of Companies, headquartered in Grand Island, Nebraska, also encompasses eight Travel Centers, seven Grandma Max's Restaurants and a Sam Bass' Saloon & Steakhouse, 40 Pump & Pantry convenience stores including three Pump & Pantry motels, two Motel 6 fran-

chises; wholesale oil, fuel and propane delivery; truck, tank and trailer repairs; environmental services for the petroleum industry; condominiums and farming. Founded in 1948, Bosselman's has expanded throughout Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, New Mexico, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and South Dakota with more than 1,200 employees.

A family organization, Bosselman's has been a leader in community service for 60 years and has supported the local communities through financial contributions, support of youth scholarships and the volunteer efforts of its employees.

Sheridan County looks at finalizing elevator

By Jan Katz Ackerman

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The push to install an elevator in the Sheridan County Courthouse may be close to an end.

Sheridan County Commission Chairman Doyle Kauk said Commissioners Keith Kennedy, Ron Schamberger and he have unanimously agreed to apply for a Community Development Block Grant to install an elevator in the courthouse.

The commissioners have asked Mort Plunkett, a Hill City architect hired to draw up plans for the project.

Plunkett said he is working on

plans that will put a "limited use access" elevator on the west side of the courthouse. Plunkett said until his plans are final, he will not have a dollar figure to release as to the cost of the project.

"The elevator will be small," Plunkett said. "On that accommodates a single wheelchair."

The elevator will require remodeling the unisex restroom which is on the ground floor, and taking space from a second floor break room and third floor file room.

"The plans will also call for some remodeling to make the courthouse comply with the ADA, such as new doors and the restrooms," Plunkett said.

As far back as June 1999,

boards of commissioners have talked about installing an elevator in the courthouse in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

That Act went into effect on Jan. 26, 1992, with structural changes to allow accessibility to have been done by Jan. 26, 1995.

In June, M.J. Willoughby, general council for the Kansas Office of Judicial Administration in Topeka, said a formal complaint logged against the county prompted her visit to Sheridan County on Monday. Willoughby was accompanied by Anthony Fadale, State Americans with Disability Act Coordinator.

The three-story courthouse is

not compliant with the Americans with Disability Act. Sheridan County Attorney Mike Haas, also present at the meeting in June, said he has been county attorney for 36 years and county commissioners have struggled with the issue of accessibility for "all 36 years."

Besides the complaint currently on the table, the topic of installing an elevator surfaced in October of 2005 when a Colorado man fell down 10-feet of the stairs. John Bergmann, 77, of Aurora, sustained bruising to his right shoulder and ribs as a result of the fall.

Bergmann, who was researching oil and gas leases in the register of deeds office, having had both hips replaced and was considered

legally disabled and was required to descend stairs by going down them backwards.

Although handrails are installed part of the way up the stairway, they are offset, making them difficult to reach. Bergmann did not sue the county at the time of his fall.

Someone else required to navigate the stairways backwards is Chief Court Clerk Vergie Wente of Hoxie.

Wente has had multiple surgeries on her hips and feet, making walking the stairs to the third floor difficult. She said she was pleased to hear the latest news about the elevator situation at the courthouse.

Briefly

Fundraiser Friday

The Colby High School Dance Team is holding a Potato Bar fundraiser at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Dennen Field prior to the high school football scrimmage. Baked potatoes and toppings, cookies and drinks will be featured for a free-will donation.

Retirement coffee Friday

A retirement coffee honoring David Delzeit, with the city's sanitation department, will be held from 3 to 5 p.m., Friday, at the

Law Enforcement Training Center, 350 N. Franklin. The public is invited to recognize Delzeit for his 40 years as a city employee. For questions, call 460-4420.

Memory Walk Sept. 20

The annual Alzheimer's Memory Walk and balloon release will be held Saturday, Sept. 20 at Fike Park in Colby. Anyone interested in walking should register at 10 a.m. (walk begins at 10:30 a.m.) If interested in sponsoring or forming a team, call Jody Metcalf, 462-3275 or Jada Tubbs, 460-9084. Money raised by walk participants goes toward advancing research into better treatments and a possible cure,

organizers said.

County meeting Friday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Friday in the commissioners' room at the courthouse, 300 N. Court Ave. in Colby. Agenda items include former Colby residents Gayona and Jim McDonald from 9 to 9:30 a.m. about land issue. From 9:30 to 9:45 a.m., Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn will ask the commissioners to approve and sign a public safety resolution. At 9:45 a.m., the commissioners will talk about the administrator director position at the public health department, and at 10 a.m. Susan McMahan, emergency preparedness

director will review communications narrow banding, estimates from Blue Valley and E911 funds. At 10:30 a.m., Bill Miller, businessman and farmer, will visit with the commissioners about mowing issues in the county. From 11:30 to noon the commissioners will talk about wind energy.

New group forming

A new group for people ages 50 and over is forming called "More Fun Together." The group is open to widowers, divorcees, people never married, or anyone who is alone. The first meeting is a potluck at 5:30 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 13, in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church, 515 W. Fourth St. For questions, call 462-6342.

