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Trucks ready to hit road in big convoy

By Andy Heintz

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The Colby and Oakley Special Olympics group will be holding the ninth annual Worlds Largest Truck Convoy, starting at 10 a.m. on Saturday in Oakley and running up Interstate 70 to Truck Town in Colby.

It will be the third year for the event here, said Jane Mentlick of Colby a state committee member, and it's the only convoy being held in Kansas this year. The Special Olympics allows children with intellectual disabilities to participate in sports competitions and health and nutrition programs.

For the convoy, truck drivers and law enforcement officers take a specific route to raise money for Special Olympics athletes. Committee Chairman Joe Mentlick said fellow truckers anywhere in the state are welcome to come join in. He said the sheriffs' departments in Thomas and Logan County, the Oakley and Colby police and the American Legion Riders will be helping with the event.

The convoy stems from a single event held in Orlando, Fla., in

2001. That first one involved just 97 trucks, but it gave birth to what would eventually become an international event that raised more than \$736,000 last year. It's currently held in 34 states and seven Canadian provinces.

Last year, the convoy in Colby raised \$13,540 and was ranked 13 among the 34 states and seven Canadian provinces, said Jane Mentlick. She said this year, the committee's goal is to finish in the top 10. A Special Olympics Kansas news release said the rankings are based on money raised from convoy registrations, sponsors and event proceeds.

The Kansas committee that organizes the convoy each year includes the Mentlicks, Tom Sloan and Jack Collins of Hoxie and Daryle Goetz of Park.

Truckers from Hoxie, Park, Oakley, Leoti, Scott City, Brewster and Hill City participated in the 2008 convoy. Special Olympics athletes and some of their family members will accompany the truckers on their drive. Athletes who attended last year's event came from several Kansas towns, including Colby,

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Church alliance benefits county

By Kevin Bottrell

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Even though it tends to fly under the radar, the Thomas County Ministerial Alliance performs community services vital to the area.

The alliance is made up of pastors, ordained ministers and even lay members from 10 churches around Thomas County. Convener Jarrod Spencer said they doesn't meet to discuss theological issues, but rather service to the community.

The alliance conducts the Baccalaureate ceremony for high school graduation, administers the transient fund — which provides money for homeless or destitute people passing through the county — and conducts the National Day of Prayer service every year.

The members take turns serving as chaplain at Citizen's Medical Center and writing religion columns for the *Colby Free Press*. The alliance is also a member of the Thomas County Coalition, a group that works to reduce alcohol and drug abuse among young people.

Members include Wes Barnett of College Biew Baptist Church, Joan Dingworth and Kent Brown of the Shepherd's Staff in Rexford, Mark Carlton of Colby Berean,

Lane Purcell of Rexford Community, Carol Rahn of First Presbyterian, W.G. Romine of Redeeming Love Ministries, Gene Rothfuss of Colby Wesleyan, Spencer of Colby Church of Christ, Steve Todd of Colby Assembly of God and Lois VanHorn of Ascension on the Prairie Episcopal.

Trinity Lutheran and First Baptist have been members of the alliance, but do not currently have representatives since their long-time ministers have retired. Spencer said several other churches participate in the chaplaincy rotation and other alliance services.

Spencer said he is excited to see all the new faces and new ideas.

"Since I came in December, we've had three new people," he said.

Spencer himself is new to the convener position. He started as interim convener in June when John Schmidt of Trinity Lutheran retired, and stayed on for the year. As convener, he is in charge of the general organization of the alliance, takes minutes at the meetings and serves as the contact for the public. He also organizes the rotation for hospital chaplains and newspaper articles.

Spencer said the alliance is open to all, and he would like to have as many churches as possible involved.



SUSAN MCMAHAN/Thomas County Emergency Management

Flood waters from storms Monday night and Tuesday night washed out part of County Road 30, including the dirt behind the wing walls of this bridge between County Roads B and C.

Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan said she has declared the county a disaster area, since damage is estimated to be more than \$27,000.

County declares flood disaster

By Kevin Bottrell

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After heavy rains in the south end of the county, Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan has declared the county a disaster area so officials can ask for state and federal help fixing roads and at least one damaged bridge.

The heavy rains Monday and Tuesday evenings caused flooding in both the southwest and southeast parts of the county along the South Fork of the Saline River. The heaviest damage, McMahan said, was on County Road 30, between County Roads B and C, just north of Oakley — where almost half of the roadway and the dirt around the wing walls of one bridge were washed away. Many of the ditches and low spots in the area are still filled with water, she said.

The storm system Monday evening dropped between 2.5

and 3.6 inches of rain. Tuesday night's storm produced another 1.5 to 2.5 inches more.

McMahan said Midwest Energy is estimating \$30,000 worth of damage to power poles and lines, some of which were snapped by the water. The County Road and Bridge Department is still assessing the damage, she said.

McMahan said she can declare a disaster if more there is more than \$27,000 worth of damage to nonprofit or government-owned facilities. The damage on Tuesday alone, she said, was enough to warrant the declaration. If enough counties in the state declare disasters, and the amount of infrastructure damage reaches \$3.1 million, the area can be declared a federal disaster and be eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance.

The National Weather Service predicts that a new cold front will move through the area on Friday, possibly bringing more thunderstorms.



Power poles in southern Thomas County, such as this one on County Road 3, were destroyed by the flood. Midwest Energy has estimated at least \$30,000 worth of damage, said Emergency Preparedness Director Susan McMahan.



Access to some farms was cut off by flood waters, such as near this railroad bridge west of U.S. 83 south of Interstate 70.

The water is from the South Fork of the Saline River.

Briefly

Coaches offer coffee, talk

Join the Colby High School football staff for "Coffee with the Coaches" at 9 a.m. Saturday and every Saturday after home and away football games at the Sports Shoppe, Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue. For information, call Eagles' Coach Chris Gardener at 460-1390.

Car seat safety checks coming

Certified technicians will do free car-seat inspections in the Walmart parking lot from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday to kick off National Safety Seat Check Week. An estimated 90 percent of all children's car seats are used incorrectly and possibly dangerous. Technicians will check for recalls, proper fit for the child and vehicle and correct installation. Safety and other exhibits will be nearby. The event is sponsored by Smart Start Northwest Kansas, which has car

seats for families who meet income requirements. For information, call Karen Merryman at 465-9103.

Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has a 2-year-old red male dachshund and two 8-week-old white female kittens available for adoption. Lost or strayed animals are often brought to the clinic. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.

RC Club to hold Sunday races

The First Baptist Church RC Club will hold its first September races at 2 p.m. Sunday. Kids 10 or older and adults are welcome; the church can provide cars. For information, call 462-2867.

Orchestra to begin rehearsals

Rehearsals for the Pride of the Prairie Orchestra will be from 7:30 to 9 p.m. every Monday beginning next week in the Colby Community College band room, at the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center, Room 309. Musicians from northwest Kansas and northeast Colorado are free to join; no auditions are necessary. For information, call Mary Shoaff at 462-2159.

Logo needed for 125th bash

The Prairie Museum of Art and History and the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce are sponsoring a logo contest for Thomas County's 125th Anniversary. Entries should include the theme for the celebration: "The Spirit of the Prairie Lives On." They may be submitted on an 8 1/2-by-11 inch sheet of paper to the museum or the Chamber office

by mail or in person by Tuesday. For information, call the museum at 460-4590 or the Chamber at 460-3401.

Church to hold kids' Bible club

The Awana program, an interdenominational children's Bible club, will be meeting at 7 p.m. each Wednesday starting next week at the Colby Berean Church. Colby-area children age 3 through fifth grade are invited to attend. For information, call James Claassen at (785) 694-1677 or the church at 460-2763.



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