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Senior citizen recovered in corn field

By Kevin Bottrell
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About 40 law enforcement officers, firefighters, wildlife officers and volunteers combed a square-mile patch of rural Thomas County for two hours Friday afternoon, trying to find a 69-year-old Colby man who had been missing overnight.

Searchers on foot finally found him alive and well, face down in a corn field about half a mile south of where his truck got stuck. With an overnight low of 34, and hearing that the man had heart surgery six months ago and needed oxygen to breathe, everyone thought that was more or less a miracle.

"We got really lucky," said Police Chief Randy Jones. "It's just a huge relief."

Jones said that Tommy Dean, 69, had been reported missing by his family at 5 p.m. Thursday. He hadn't been seen since about 11 a.m. that morning and the family was hoping the police could find him. Jones said the department got his description and vehicle description out to all officers and put out an "attempt to locate" for all of northwest Kansas.

The next morning, Dean had still come home. Jones said he and his officers searched within the city limits and at places Dean was known to frequent. Jones said that afternoon, he was told about a farmstead in the county where Dean had been before. Jones said he went himself because the city officers and sheriff's deputies on duty were tied up elsewhere.

He spotted the truck from a hill on County Road X overlooking

the Sappa Valley, about five miles north of Colby and a mile or more north of the man's truck.

"As I was going up the hill, looking to my left I saw the sun reflecting off something bright," Jones said.

The truck was stuck in a ravine in a large patch of ragweed in a creek bed south of County Road W. That road continues as a track between Roads 15 and 16, but is not paved, graded or sanded. The track winds down into the small creek bed and the goes up and over a steep bluff to meet County Road 16.

It looked as if Dean has gotten off the main track and tired to go around the ravine to the south, but the two-wheel-drive pickup would not come back out of the hole.

Jones said he searched the vehicle and the area around it and foot, but there was no sign of Dean. The patch of ragweed was tall, seven foot or more, and thick enough to hamper a search on foot. Jones has some trouble calling out of the valley, but ask dispatchers for more manpower to begin a search of the surrounding area, which included a fallow field, a corn field, several cedar wind breaks and fields of tall Conservation Reserve grass. The nearest occupied home is a farm to the west.

Sheriff Rod Taylor and several other officers arrived quickly to help with the search.

At about 2:10, Taylor called for any and all available volunteers to meet in the area. Searchers came from the Colby Fire Department, county and city road crews, the Kansas Highway Patrol, Thomas County Emergency Management, Colby Implement and others. A



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

After being found alive and well in a corn field near where his truck had gone into a ravine, Colby resident Tommy Dean was checked out on the way to meet an ambulance on Country Road

W. Dean, who had been missing since Thursday morning, was found after a search near his truck near Sappa Creek, northwest of Colby. He was taken to Citizens Medical Center.

crew of state game wardens lunching in Colby came to help; Wildlife Officer Benny Young of Colby said they'd been out working the first day of antelope season and had come to town for lunch when

they heard the call.

Dave Pabst came with four horses and riders Karen Pabst, Wilbur Henry and Clair Schrock,

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STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Colby Police Chief Randy Jones and sheriff's deputies examined a missing man's truck during the search, attempting to determine how and when he had gotten stuck. The truck was stuck part way into a gully in a patch of ragweed in a creek bed about six miles northwest of Colby sometime Thursday night or Friday morning. Jones spotted the truck about 2 p.m. Friday afternoon.



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Law enforcement officers, fire fighters and many other volunteers gathered on a hill between County Roads 15 and 16 Friday afternoon to coordinate the search for a missing Colby man.

Volunteers searched on foot, with trucks and four-wheelers, on horseback and even from the air. Dean was found at about 4:10 p.m., about two hours after his truck was discovered.

Economy may put the brakes on transportation plan

By John Hanna
AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — A campaign to form a new state transportation program already is in trouble, even before legislators have discussed a specific plan for financing improvements in Kansas' highways, bridges, airports and public transit.

Any proposal probably will rely on increasing gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, raising vehicle registration fees and is-

suing bonds. The Republican-controlled Legislature is at best unenthusiastic about such ideas.

The sour economy and the state's budget problems make passage of a new transportation program even less likely. Earlier this year, thoughts of passing a new program disappeared as legislators focused instead on keeping the budget balanced.

Backers of a follow-up to the 10-year, \$13 billion-plus program that ended this

summer relaunched their campaign last week with a news conference designed to highlight needs across the state. The next day, members of a legislative study committee pledged to draft a plan for financing a new program.

But then, the following day, state officials learned September tax collections fell an estimated \$67 million short of expectations. The suggested legislators may have little time to think about new programs after they convene their 2010 ses-

sion in January — and little to spend.

"We're moving into a different environment than we've ever been in politically," said Patrick Hurley, executive director of Economic Lifelines, a coalition of business, union and community groups, including contractors, that backs a new program. "It's a very complicated picture, no question about it."

The Legislature's Special Committee on Transportation plans to meet in November to discuss a new program.

Its chairman, Sen. Dwayne Umbarger, a Thayer Republican, expects that he and other members will draft a financing plan ahead of the meeting.

A new program would lock the state deeper into a cycle of big, multiyear programs designed to correct safety problems, head off future traffic congestion and promote economic development. The first program was passed in 1989, fol-

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Briefly

Seniors plan potluck Tuesday

The group More Fun Together plans a potluck dinner for people 50 or older who are alone, widowed, divorced, separated or who have partners in nursing homes at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the First Presbyterian Church. Bring a dish to share. Table service and beverage will be provided. The building is handicapped accessible with an elevator by the east doors. For information, call the church at 462-6342.

Sign up for food package

Prairie Land Food sign up for October will be through Friday at the State Farm Insurance office, 95 E. Fourth St. Delivery will be 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 24 at the Sacred Heart School Gym, 1150 W. Sixth. For information, call Gene Griffin at 460-3579.

Students to give free massages

The Therapeutic Massage Department at Colby

Community College plans public clinics on Wednesdays this month in Thomas Hall, room 402. Cubicle massages are 30 minutes and chair massages 15, starting at 6:15 p.m., 7 p.m., 7:45 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Massages will focus on shoulders and back on Wednesday; neck, shoulders and chest on Oct. 14; feet on Oct. 21; and legs and feet on Oct. 28. Donations will be accepted. To make an appointment or for information, contact Director Debra Waites at (785) 460-5427 or e-mail debra.waites@colbycc.edu.

City offers softball clinics

The Colby Recreation Department plans "Fundamentals of Softball" clinics on Saturday and Sunday and Sunday, Oct. 18, at the Colby Community College baseball fields. Hitting, fielding and base-running will be covered from 12:30 to 2 p.m. for ages 8-15 and from 3:30 to 5 p.m. for those 16 and over.

Pitching and catching will be from 2-3 p.m. for all ages. Each clinic is \$35. Sign up at the recreation office in the Community Building by Wednesday. For information, call Recreation Director Stacy Lee at 460-4440.

Book fair is Thursday, Friday

Sacred Heart School will have a Scholastic Book Fair from 3:40 to 7:45 p.m. on Thursday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday in the gym. For information, call Sister Loretta at the school at 460-2813.

County van off on half a day

The Thomas County transportation van will run from only from 12:30 to 4 p.m. on Friday because the driver will be off. For information, call County Clerk Shelly Harms at 460-4500.

Soup, auction to help family

A benefit soup dinner and auction Saturday at TNT Auction will raise money for the family of Rusti Hopper, who died Sept. 8. The dinner will begin at 11:30, with the auction following at 1 p.m. The Bruce Bandy Barbershop Quartet, the Bugbee Sisters, Blake and Brandon McLemore and Tom Harrison will entertain. Items up for auction include a king-size quilt, a set of tires, bags of seed corn, a boy's bike and many others donated by area businesses and individuals. Friends say the family needs help with medical and funeral expenses. For information, call Sharon Woofert at 269-7180.



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