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Expert says wheat looks 'promising'

By Kevin Bottrell

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It may not be as good as last year, but there is some hope for the 2011 wheat crop.

Thomas County Extension Agent Clint Milliman said the wheat around Colby looks promising, though not as good as the past several years. Milliman said he can't estimate yield potential right now, since the wheat is in the jointing stage.

"Time will tell," he said. What worried farmers would most like to see, he said, is some rain.

The University of Nebraska's U.S. Drought Monitor continues to list the northwest corner of Kansas in a moderate drought.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's crop progress and condition report for March 27 said the wheat in northwest Kansas is 17 percent jointed. Milliman said this is a critical time for the plants, because this is when head size is determined.

Farmers will be putting nitrogen on their fields, he said, which helps increase head size. The larger the

head, the greater the yield. Nitrogen also facilitates photosynthesis, he said, allowing the wheat to grow more foliage.

In this stage, Milliman said, the wheat needs moisture and warmer days. The snow and rain in recent weeks has helped green it up.

"We sure could use a lot more moisture to get the foliage growing," he added.

Across Kansas, the crop condition report rates 13 percent of the wheat as very poor; poor, 22; fair, 34; good, 27; and excellent, 4. There has been minimal winter kill, or damage from freezing, wind, insects or disease.

In the northwest, top and subsoil moisture is either short (52 percent) or very short (39 to 39 percent).

Some fields may not turn out well, Milliman said, and farmers have several options for bad crops. Some crop insurance plans may require them to take the field to harvest, while others may allow them to till up the wheat and plant corn.

The National Weather Service is predicting temperatures in the 60s and 70s this week, with a chance for rain Wednesday and Thursday.

Assembling the fort



ALAN SAGER

Colby Boy Scout Braden Sager (left) and a volunteer worked on a play fort at the Colby United Methodist Church over spring break. Sager, who belongs to Troop 141, built the fort and a

swing set as part of his Eagle Scout project, a 100-hour service project required to earn Boy Scouting's highest rank.

Republican legislators trying to keep budget promises

By John Milburn

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — For the Republican majority elected last November to the Kansas House, it was their chance to show voters the meant what they said when going door to door.

Before them on Thursday was a \$14

billion state budget and a chance to exercise their right to pull back government's reach, if not at least slow its growth.

"What we are simply doing is cutting government and stopping the growth of government, which is what I came here to do," said Rep. Owen Donohoe, a Shawnee Republican.

Republicans hold a 92-33 majority in

the House. They used that leverage earlier in the session to insert a rule limiting the scope of the budget debate. In previous sessions, legislators could amend the bill to spend more money, but didn't have to identify a source to pay for it.

For the next two years, House members can cut the budget all they want to increase savings, but any spending in-

creases have to take a like amount from elsewhere in the budget. It's called "pay-go" for pay-as-you-go.

House Speaker Mike O'Neal, a Hutchinson Republican, said the rule has forced legislators to have a deeper understanding of budgets and what money might be available.

"I think it's served its purpose," he

said. Rep. Lance Kinzer said voters would look at the size of the budget and see how it had grown in just two years by more than \$800 million in state sales and income taxes.

"It's just too hard for government to

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Eastern European exchange students enjoy living in Brewster

By Vera Sloan

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It was like old home week when 19-year-old Hanna Kosteckova, a citizen of the Czech Republic, came to Brewster the end of December.

Petra Angie Matusova, 16, from neighboring Slovakia, had been in town since Sept. 1, and was more than happy to welcome someone from near her homeland to the flatlands of Kansas.

Czech Republic and Slovakia both were part of Czechoslovakia before 1993, when they became separate nations after the "Velvet Revolution," a nonviolent event which overthrew the communist government after 40 years of rule.

Kosteckova said she was especially happy to see Matusova because when she arrived, she herself didn't speak a word of English. You'd never guess that now.

"Although our language is not the same, we understand each other, and it was working good to



Exchange students Hanna Kosteckova (left) and Petra Matusova from the Czech Republic and Slovakia at the home of Darrell and Jackie Jorgenson in Brewster, where Matusova is staying.

translate," said Matusova. She laughed and said while they

would be talking to each other, people would just nod and smile,

"because they had no idea what we were saying."

Kosteckova lives with Jim and Jessica House and their four children in Brewster. She says in "real life" in her homeland, she has only one brother.

Matusova lives with Darrell and Jackie Jorgenson, their son and two grandsons. She says life is interesting, especially when the grandsons, Jace and Nathan, break into her room early in the morning yelling, "tornado, tornado."

"That wakes me up fast," she said.

Kosteckova says English is not spoken much in her country. She came to the U.S. as an exchange student because her father wanted her to learn the language. She claims she had no fear of coming to America alone, and she'd like to live here someday.

"My country is not so good," she explained. "There are only about 20 percent Czechs in my school, many Arabians and a lot of Russians."

She said Russian Mafia children go to her school, which she

described as small, in a town of 10,000.

"Boy come to school with gun in trousers," she said, "and they do nothing because he is son of Mafia. If there are problems, parents pay principal."

Matusova said she already spoke English before she arrived in America. She wanted to improve her language skills before she applies for a college scholarship. She said she hopes to apply to the University of Tokyo, where she wants to study science. She says she can speak some Japanese and that her embassy and the Japanese ministry give good science scholarships.

Matusova says the entire student body of Brewster High School is the size of her class in her school in Slovakia, and only a third the size of Kosteckova's graduating class.

"I know everyone in the Brewster junior high and high school," she said. "It's the only place I know where you can be a nerd and a cheerleader at the same time."

Both girls have joined the golf team, not something new for Kosteckova, but a first for Matusova, who said her first experience was quite memorable.

Kosteckova says she wants to be a psychologist. Matusova has her eye set on being either a chemist doing lab work and research or a teacher, which she says doesn't pay well in her country either.

She says being a cheerleader has improved her spelling skills. Defense and Mississippi are a breeze for her now.

She says she enjoys sleeping in until 7 a.m. She had to be out of bed and going at 5 a.m. in her home country to make it to school on time.

"You can choose which school you want to go to, she said, "and I chose a good school many miles away."

She said she gets on the train and travels a half hour to the capital city, and then it takes another half hour by bus to get to her school. She said she feels the school in her

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Briefly

Al-Anon groups shift to church

The Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups — a fellowship of men, women and youths who share experiences to help overcome alcohol addiction — will change their meeting place to the Colby United Methodist Church starting Wednesday. The groups meet from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. each week with a recovery system based on the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step program. For information, call the church at 460-2761.

Hospital plans childbirth classes

Citizens Medical Center will offer a four weeks of childbirth classes from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursdays starting this week. Women due to deliver before August should attend with their labor support partner. The next classes will begin July 7. For information or to register, call Jeanene Brown at the hospital Education Department, (785) 460-4850.

'Rolling Thunder' of prayer soon

For the second year, Operation Rolling Thunder will call people to prayer for the 30 days leading up to the National Day of Prayer on Thursday, May 5. Anyone in northwest Kansas, individuals, groups or churches, interested in participating in a prayer team from Tuesday through May 5 should contact Marsha Berens at 462-0388.

Kindergarten screening Tuesday

Colby Grade School and the Northwest Kansas Education Service Center will have kindergarten screenings from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, April 11, and 8 a.m. to noon Tuesday, April 12, at the Colby United Methodist Church. The screenings test children's hearing, language skills and cognitive development to check readiness for school. To make an appointment, call school nurse Amy Huffles at 460-5111.

Photographer to be at museum

Come meet photographer Roxie Yonkey of Goodland at an informal reception from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 16, at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. She is exhibiting a selection of her work through April, touching on both rural and urban themes. For information, call the museum at 460-4590.

Senior group offering tax help

The American Association of Retired Persons will offer tax preparation help for low- and middle-income taxpayers — with preference to those 60 or older — by appointment until April 15. For information or to set up an appointment, call Earle Rice at 462-2990.

Chickenpox shots available

The Thomas County Health Department will be offering chickenpox vaccinations for \$14 until the

end of June for anyone ages 1 to 18. The department says anyone who did not have chickenpox after age 1 should get two doses. For information or to make an appointment, call 460-4596.

Head Start looking for kids

Head Start, a tuition-free preschool, is accepting applications for its 2011-2012 school year. The school accepts applications all year long for kids aged 3 and 4. For information, or to get an application, call 460-6067.



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