



Wheat harvest rolls on



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

While most of the harvest is complete in Thomas County here are still a few harvesters out cutting wheat. One crew could be seen in this field just north of Colby on Tuesday. County Extension Agent Clint Milliman said the recent rain has slowed a few harvesters, but most Thomas County fields have been cut. Milliman said yields have been all over the board, varying from the teens and twenties to the fifties and sixties. Test weights are good however. Milliman said he has heard many test weights from 61 to 63 pounds per bushel.

Atlantis rockets into history on final flight

By Marcia Dunn
AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Atlantis and four astronauts rocketed into orbit this morning on NASA's last space shuttle voyage, dodging bad weather and delighting hundreds of thousands of spectators on hand to witness the end of an era.

It will be at least three years — possibly

five or more — before astronauts launch again from U.S. soil, and so this final journey of the shuttle era packed in crowds and roused emotions on a scale not seen since the Apollo moon shots.

After days of gloomy forecasts full of rain and heavy cloud cover, the spaceship lifted off at 11:29 a.m. — just 2 1/2 minutes late — thundering away on the 135th shuttle mission 30 years and three months

after the very first flight. The four experienced space fliers rode Atlantis from the same pad used more than a generation ago by the Apollo astronauts.

The shuttle was visible for 42 seconds before disappearing into the clouds.

NASA waived its own weather rules to allow the liftoff to go forward. In the end, though, the countdown was delayed not by the weather but by the need to verify

that the launch pad support equipment was retracted all the way.

The crew will deliver a year's worth of critical supplies to the International Space Station and return with as much trash as possible. Atlantis is scheduled to come home on July 20 after 12 days in orbit.

Before taking flight, Commander Christopher Ferguson saluted all those who contributed over the years to the

shuttle program.

"The shuttle is always going to be a reflection of what a great nation can do when it dares to be bold and commits to follow through," he said, addressing NASA launch director Mike Leinbach. "We're not ending the journey today ... we're completing a chapter of a journey

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Bluegrass festival to begin Thursday

By Tomi Miller
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Entertainment, activities and workshops will all be rolled into one fun-filled weekend at the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Festival. The community is invited to join the festivities from Thursday to Saturday, July 14 to 17, at the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

The festival will start off with a free potluck dinner at 6:30 p.m., Thursday at the 4-H building. After the potluck, there will be a jam session featuring the band Driven, and other community members. The public is encouraged to bring a covered dish, an instrument if they wish to play, lawn chairs and insect spray.

Throughout the weekend, the community can share in the music of the many bluegrass-inspired bands that are featured in the festival,

the various youth activities sponsored by local businesses and the workshops put on by experienced musicians.

Passes for the event are available at the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau in the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 South Range; Plum Creek in downtown Colby; and the Farmers and Merchants Branch Bank in

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Growing strong



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

Volunteer gardeners are watering and waiting for produce to ripen at the Community Garden, said organizer Orvella Romine. The garden has six plots run by different civic organizations and a main plot run by volunteers. A portion of each plot will be given to the Genesis food bank.



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

Chamber looking for entries in parade

By Christina Beringer
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Be a part of "Your Ticket to Fun," this year's Thomas County Fair Parade, which will begin at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 26, at East Eighth Street and Franklin Avenue.

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce and the Thomas County Fair Board are looking for parade entries. Anyone interested should submit a registration form to the chamber by Friday, July 22.

Differing from past years, the chamber is now asking entrants not to throw candy during the parade, however, walkers are allowed to hand out candy.

"It's for safety," said Holly Whitaker, Chamber of Commerce director. "We had over 60 entries last year and the streets of Franklin were packed with small children. Our first priority is to make the parade a fun and safe experience for everyone."

Whitaker said the new rule was received with positive comments from the public when it was first enforced at last year's Christmas Parade.

Entries in the parade will be awarded prizes for the first and second place in each category. First place winners will receive a \$40 chamber gift certificate and

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Family band performs for crowd

A good crowd came to Wednesday's Picnic in the Park, bringing a variety of lunch items such as pizza (above). This week's entertainment was provided by the Wagoner Family, which included Brock Wagoner (left) on keyboard and vocals. Next week's entertainment will be formerly-local bluegrass band Sappa Strings.

Group urges government to cut off Kansas' arts money

By John Hanna
The Associated Press

TOPEKA — A national advocacy group is urging the federal government's arts agency to withhold money from Kansas after Gov. Sam Brownback made it the first U.S. state to eliminate its funding for arts programs.

Americans for the Arts, a non-profit group based in Washington, wants the National Endowment for the Arts to send a strong message that each state must be "a fair partner" in supporting the arts, the advocacy group's chief executive, Robert Lynch, said Thursday. He said allowing Kansas to receive federal dollars without putting up any of its own funds would be unfair to other states.

The NEA has already said that Kansas isn't eligible for federal funds because it no longer finances a state arts agency, but officials in Brownback's administration don't view the issue as settled. Arts advocates expect the state to lose up to \$1.2 million a year, both from the NEA and the Mid-America Arts Alliance, a regional group based in Kansas City, Mo.

Brownback vetoed the Kansas Arts Commission's entire appropriation in May as well as a line in the state's current budget allowing the commission to retain its staff. The commission itself still exists,

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