



Cross-country ride makes stop in Oakley

By Kevin Bottrell
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When a group of almost 30 bicyclists rode into Oakley on Friday, they all had one question on their minds: "is it always this hot here?"

The riders were on a 3,600 mile cross country ride to help raise money and awareness for the Fuller Center for Housing, a non-profit organization that builds and renovates homes for poor families. The riders stopped in Oakley after almost eight hours of riding on U.S. 40 in 100 degree heat. They stayed the night at the Oakley Christian Church, which also put on a potluck dinner.

Scott Umstadd, who used to work for Habitat for Humanity, is one of two support volunteers who drive a van with water, food and other supplies. Umstadd said the van drives ahead about 20 miles and then waits for the riders in case they need anything.

The riders left Seattle on June 12 and plan to get to Washington D.C. in August. Some of the way has been difficult, Umstadd said. The riders went over high passes in Idaho and Colorado.

"They thought it was strange to see snow in July," he said. "But not when you get up to 11,000 feet."

The numbers fluctuate, Umstadd said, but right now there are 26 riders. Twenty-two are going



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Honeymooners Krystal Goodwin and Michael Tiemeyer rode past their equipment trailer while the riders were resting in Oakley. The couple hadn't planned on riding a tandem bike, but their original bikes were lost in a van crash before the ride started.

the whole distance, he said, and more join for one or two legs.

Umstadd said the riders vary in age from 19 to 69. The group includes Chris Cosby of Birmingham, Ala., who has ridden at least some of way all four years. Krystal Goodwin and Michael Tiemeyer are on their honeymoon. They first met at last year's ride and got

married in between.

"It's a really good group of people," Umstadd said. "When you're out there suffering, you really rely on your friends, whether it's joke telling or fixing a flat tire."

The differences in the riders are much like what you'd find in a

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City to make big splash in energy competition

The City of Colby will try to get ahead in the Take Charge Challenge with a "Big Splash Event" at 11 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, at the Colby Aquatic Center.

The event will start with Learning Tree activities, which include a 10-minute "energy bandit" skit, followed by three projects taught by local teachers who have completed a workshop from the Kansas Association for Conservation and Education.

The first 400 people aged 4 and older who complete the Learning Tree will get into a free barbecue at 12:30 p.m. The first 200 people get into the pool free that day.

The Take Charge Committee will have a booth set

up at the pool entrance to hand out information on home energy upgrades. The city gets 30 points for each person who completes the Learning Tree projects and 10 points for everyone present at the energy bandit skit.

The points go toward Colby's standing in the Take Charge Challenge. Colby is competing with Goodland, Oakley, WaKeeney and Hoxie to see which city can get the most energy-efficient light bulb trades, home energy audits and hold the most events. The winner gets \$100,000 toward energy efficient improvements for the city. Colby is currently in fourth place.

Heat wave likely to continue

By Murray Evans
The Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY - As temperatures climbed into the 90s Sunday in Steele, N.D., a small window air conditioner in Paul and Betty Smokov's ranch home just couldn't keep up.

"It's 82 in the house," Betty Smokov said. "The heat is really oppressive and sticky."

That observation could be made anywhere in the central U.S. Heat advisories and warnings were in place in 17 states, from Texas to Michigan, as temperatures and humidity combined to make being outside uncomfortable for millions. One National Weather Service forecaster called the heat

wave "unrelenting" and said sweaty residents shouldn't expect any relief soon: A so-called "heat dome" over the region isn't moving much.

"The trend is not our friend right now," said Daryl Williams, a forecaster in Norman.

In Oklahoma City, forecasters expected another day of 100-degree heat Sunday, which would be the 27th day this year the city has reached 100 or above. The city is on pace to break its record for such days - 50 set in 1980 - with triple-digit heat possible through September.

It's even worse in western Oklahoma, where temperatures at 110 or above have been common in recent weeks. In Enid, asphalt at

a major intersection along U.S. Highway 412 buckled Saturday night from the intense heat.

Justin Tinder of Weatherford and his family visited the Oklahoma City Zoo on Sunday, arriving at 9 a.m.

"By noon, we were headed out," Tinder said. "It was too hot for us to stand much longer. We decided to check it in and go find some air conditioning."

In Chicago, city officials said a half-dozen cooling centers would remain open this week, as temperatures as high as 105 were forecast in Illinois.

Cooling centers also were open in Detroit to help residents who

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

House burns downtown Friday night

Renters were forced from their home on South Chickamauga after a fire started about 7:30 p.m. Friday. Because of the number of trees around the sides and back of the house, firefighters had to use a ladder truck to shoot water down into a hole in the roof (above) and carry hoses around the side by hand. Firefighters had drinking water waiting for them to cool off after fighting the fire inside the house (right). Flames and smoke could be seen coming out of the attic (below). Firefighters were able to put the blaze out within about an hour.



Revenue expected to fall short of education board's request

By John Milburn
The Associated Press

TOPEKA - Kansas policymakers are expected to learn in the coming days just how well they did at cutting government spending and collecting revenue in the last fiscal year.

Preliminary numbers from legislative staff suggest there could be as much as \$175 million in the bank as Kansas enters fiscal year 2012. That's a far cry from where the state was just six months ago when Gov. Sam Brownback and the Republican-controlled Legislature were staring at a deficit that approached \$500 million.

Brownback and legislators trimmed spending by close to \$800 million in the state's overall \$14 billion budget from the previous year, including reducing funds for public schools by \$232 per student.

The cuts made a dent in the extra money legislators had agreed to spend on public education in response to a 2006 Kansas Supreme Court ruling that the state's system for funding schools was out of whack and needed fixed.

Now, with revenues improving, the State Board of Education is asking that those funds be restored. But members know that's a tall order given the atmosphere in the Statehouse firmly in the austere mode.

"We can recommend until the cows come home and advocate for funding the law, but it's not going to happen," she said. "We can take this moral position, but they're not going to listen to us anyway," said board member Sue Storm, a former legislator from Overland Park.

Brownback has said he wants to lower taxes in Kansas to encourage business growth, suggesting cuts in the income tax rates to spur growth.

"To grow the state long-term we need a fundamentally new tax code that rewards investment and makes us more competitive globally for entrepreneurs and capital. That's how we'll grow and keep jobs for generations to come," he said recently.

There have been recent employment gains with announcement of a new candy factory, information technology and wind energy companies coming to Kansas, bringing more than 1,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Revenue Secretary Nick Jordan, a former state senator, will be leading a study committee looking at tax reform ahead of the 2012 legislative session. Legislators had proposals of their own this past session to eliminate the corporate income tax, which generates an average of close to \$200 million annually.

Some state board members said asking for a smaller amount equal to inflation, or about \$85 million, was more realistic and

would improve relations with legislators. "The reality is that our economy is in recession," said Walt Chappell of Wichita. "If we send over another budget that says fund the law, it's going to be dead on arrival."

Kansas spends roughly half of its budget on K-12 schools, more than \$3.1 billion in the current fiscal year out of \$6 billion in state general tax revenues. However, declining state revenues caused

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