



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Near miss at Norton fair worries town

By Carleen Bell
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Four children escaped what could have been a tragedy Thursday evening at the Norton County Fair when a portion of a carnival ride broke off and dropped four ride occupants about seven feet to the ground.

According to Curtis Eveleigh, President of the Norton County Community Services Association, the ride known as "The Spider" was full of riders at about 10:15 Thursday evening at the Norton County Fairgrounds when a pipe supporting an arm of the ride broke off from the rest of the ride. The metal support beam was attached to two carts, each holding two school-aged girls.

The four girls fell with the carts about seven feet to the ground below when the support beam broke. Eveleigh reported that the girls each suffered minor injuries and at least one was transported to Kearney for evaluation and treatment of her injuries. Official reports of the girls' injuries were unavailable, but Eveleigh said the injuries were minor.

"To my knowledge, there were no major injuries," he said. "The girls were transported to the hos-

pital for observation and treatment and other than that, I don't know what the injuries were."

The ride was not fully operating at the time of the incident, but was stopped to load and unload riders. Because the ride was not operating at full speed, the car carrying the girls dropped straight to the ground instead of flying outward.

While emergency response personnel were working with the injured children, Eveleigh said, other ride patrons were left sitting on the ride for about 45 minutes. City employees brought in bucket trucks to begin evacuating the other riders, but because of the mechanics of the ride, operators were able to evacuate the ride without the bucket trucks.

Eveleigh commended the emergency response personnel for their quick response to the situation and to the other patrons who remained calm during the crisis.

"Everyone stayed calm while they had to wait and the other riders were very quiet," he said. "That made it much easier to work through the incident."

The home-owned carnival equipment is owned by the Norton County Community Services Association and is erected each year

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Eyes on the prize



Pedalling a miniature tractor takes hard work and concentration, as this young girl found out last week. The pedal tractor pull draws dozens of kids to the fair each year for a chance at competing at the state fair. For more fair photos, see Page 5.

KAYLA CORNETT/Colby Free Press

Mental health organization sees only small budget cut

By Christina Beringer
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As non-profits across Kansas continue to lose funding or are faced with drastic budget cuts, Wings Upon the Prairie in Colby, an organization which provides support for persons with mental illness, manages to squeeze

\$50,000 from the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services for 2012 operations.

"It seems like we constantly hear about non-profit offices closing," said part-time executive director Dana Schmid. "So we were expecting to hear bad news when we applied for our annual budget allotment from SRS. Luckily, our application for 2012 was renewed

with only a 3 percent cut."

Schmid said the organization is a forerunner in leading and empowering mental health patients. People who utilize its services are also the ones who hold positions on its board of directors. The board makes hiring and financial decisions and helps determine program scheduling.

"Many people don't realize that

those with major mental illness go on to lead perfectly normal, productive and healthy lives," Schmid said, "and statistics show that one if four American families are affected by mental illness."

The organization provides its members with services that help them in their daily lives: from life skills to education about health care and from peer-to-peer counseling to activities that help them break out of isolation.

"Many of our consumers are eager to learn basic life skills that have never been taught to them," said Schmid. "For example, we have taught classes on how to change a vacuum belt, how to sew on a button, clean a drain, how to cook on a budget and how to manage a checkbook."

Schmid said that Kansas is the only state that provides such assistance to people who use mental

health services or for friends and family who care for someone with mental illness.

Schmid said since they are not affiliated with institutions like the Larned Correctional Mental Health or the High Plains Mental Health facilities, they do not have to abide by the same rules, are not bound by the same means of funding and have more leverage in providing outside sources of care. Members who govern the organization through the board of directors are given the unique opportunity to serve on the Governor's Council in Wichita. These individuals work with government leaders on mental health issues, laws and regulations.

There are two in Colby who hold positions on the council, one is on the Homeless Committee and the other member is on the Consumer Advisory Council.

"Consumers at Wings Upon the Prairie are not only receiving help with their mental health needs, but they are also giving back to their community as well," said Schmid. "We do plenty of fundraisers and activities throughout the year that benefit a variety of other non-profit organizations and people in need."

Right now, members are involved with Crochet for a Cause. In 2010 they crocheted over 150 scarves, more than 100 knitted hats, baby blankets and booties. Most of the items were donated to a men's homeless shelter in Wichita and they are now looking for a local group to donate their baby apparel to.

The organization is funded primarily through a grant from the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, local fundraisers and donations.

Long-term care advocates to hold information meetings

By Christina Beringer
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Kansas Advocates for Better Care is visiting Colby this week to share information and advocacy tools about long-term care.

On Thursday the organization will give presentations from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Prairie Senior Living Complex; 11:15 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. at the Senior Progress Center; and 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Pioneer Memorial Library. All presentations are free and open to the public.

The advocacy group aims to empower and equip older Kansans and their families with information to ensure they are receiving high-quality long-term care. They also plan to educate Colby residents who are not accustomed to how nursing homes operate and the services they provide.

Presentations will be given by Evie Curtis, Glenna Clingingsmith and Velvet Johnson. Curtis is a volunteer and board member for the organization who will share information, resources and stories about long-term care and advocacy. Clingingsmith is representing the Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging.

Johnson is a Kansas long-term care ombudsman and the liaison for the Prairie Senior Living Complex in Colby. She investigates and resolves complaints by nursing-home residents and ensures they are receiving quality care.

"Often there are misconceptions of what long-

term care is, how it is paid for or how to advocate for ourselves or a loved one receiving care," said the organization's executive director, Mitzi McFatrich. "Kansas Advocates for Better Care has 36 years of experience, 650 member volunteers and a 15 board of directors who advocate for quality care every day. KABC is committed to improving care for our elders by sharing resources with all Kansans."

Joan Jamison, head of nursing at the Prairie Senior Living Complex, said they are looking forward to sponsoring one of the three presentations.

"People attending can expect to learn about the rights that long-term care residents have and will be ensured that residents have a voice and are important," she said. "It will be an incredibly valuable experience for anyone who lives in or has a loved one in a long-term care facility."

Jamison said that under the law residents are given rights that the facility protects and promotes. Basically, she said, residents have the right to do whatever they want without bringing harm to themselves or to others.

"Residents in long-term care have the right to privacy and freedom," Jamison said. "They can have

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In memory of...



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

City employees were hard at work Monday morning putting up two new benches in Fike Park. The benches are in memory of Jim Withers, who died May 5. He was a rancher and farmer who used to walk his dog in the park. He had told his wife Judie that there should be more benches in the park. She made the donation with money from the memorial service.

Dry spring just a memory after storms

After a dry spring, a series of evening thunderstorms has finally put precipitation totals over Thomas County's yearly average.

Thomas County's average yearly rainfall up to the end of July is 13.61 inches. The Kansas State Research Station puts Colby's total at 14.8 inches. Colby exceeded the average on July 21 when a rainstorm dropped 1.51 inches in one night.

The latest major storm came Thursday night. Colby only got .46 inches, but the National Weather Service office in Goodland says things were more intense to the north and west.

Bird City reported hail up to half-dollar size. Wind gusts of up to 70 miles per hour were reported southwest of Bird City and 80 miles per hour - hurricane

force winds on the Beaufort Scale of wind speed - north of Goodland.

The storm brought "torrential" rain, according to one service report, with flash flooding in Cheyenne and Sherman Counties. Spotters reported waist-deep water across a county road in northern Sherman County. Roads were also washed out in Kit Carson County, Colo.

That wasn't the only storm last week. Colby got .6 inches Wednesday.

The weather service is predicting more rain, with a 20 to 50 percent chance of thunderstorms every day this week. Temperatures are expected to be as high as 102 degrees today, but in the low 90s the rest of the week.

