



## City collects donations for fire victims

By Kevin Bottrell

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The city of Colby has started a fund to help a family who lost their home in a fire Saturday morning.

Larry Horinek and his family escaped the fire but lost the contents of the home. Donations can be sent to Debbie Zerr, city finance director, at 585 N. Franklin Ave., Colby, Kan., 67701.

Fire Chief Bob McLemore said the de-

partment got the call at 8:22 a.m. Saturday morning. By the time they arrived on Ninth Street a few minutes later, the house was completely in flames. Firefighters were able to get the fire out quickly. McLemore said they tapped two nearby hydrants for water, but they did not have to work much to ventilate, because much of the roof had collapsed.

The main floor of the home was gutted and the basement suffered smoke and water damage.

McLemore said the family got out

of the house immediately, but Horinek stayed inside to fight the fire. The house experienced an effect call "flashover" where all the contents reach the point of ignition at the same time, which will burn everything in a room within a few seconds. Horinek had been heading back toward the living room with an extinguisher when this happened. He got out the back door, but sustained some burns.

McLemore said the fire could have easily been tragic had Horinek not gotten out of the house when he did. Staying inside

to try and fight even a small fire can be dangerous.

"Use your best judgment," he said. "If you're in doubt, get out." The home had no working smoke alarms, McLemore said.

"In a typical fire, you have about three minutes from the alarm to get out," he said.

If you don't have a smoke alarm, he said, it cuts down that reaction time.

An investigator from the Kansas Fire Marshal's office was out Tuesday. He

and McLemore determined that the fire started near the end of a sofa. There was a power strip in the vicinity, McLemore said, but they couldn't determine if that was the cause of the fire.

The department responded to another call on Monday. Smoke was coming into one of the rooms at Heartland Christian School, which set off an alarm and prompted an evacuation. McLemore said a bad bearing on a rooftop fan caused a

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## County plans 911 meeting on transition

By Christina Beringer

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Emergency Management director Susan McMahan came to Monday's commissioner meeting to talk about Senate Bill 50, "Kansas 911 Act," which was passed in May 2011 and will change fees, charges, collection and distribution of emergency communications services starting Jan. 1.

After the meeting, McMahan explained that the emergency 911 infrastructure for Thomas County is managed and operated by the county, which also administers money and reporting, but the city of Colby owns the communication services and employs the dispatchers.

Because of the new bill, she said, money for 911 services will now go to the city since they own the Public Safety Answering Point.

"There are so many functions of 911 services and so many different things that 911 pays for," McMahan said. "In a given year it has \$50,000 in bills and maintenance expenses, not including salary and

building costs. That's just so 911 can run."

The county is concerned about how the transition of funding will affect a possible change of duties, as well.

"We need to discuss what 911 entails and every avenue of what 911 does; pending projects like the grant received by the county to pay for aerial orthophotography photos; and which fees have been paid," said McMahan. "The state is extremely stringent on rules and gives fines if funding is not spent right."

The county has drawn up a letter to invite anyone who deals with emergency 911 services to discuss how the transition will take effect.

"They can turn it all over to the city, if that's what they want to do, or we need to work something out," said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong. "As far as I know, it won't affect how 911 services are operated."

The meeting is set to take place at 9 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 18, at the

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## Skepticism prevails on education plan

By John Hanna

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — One of Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback's top aides tried Tuesday to reassure the State Board of Education that a school finance plan now in development won't further cut funding or harm poor districts, but board members expressed skepticism.

Brownback's administration is drafting a plan to overhaul how the state distributes \$3 billion in aid to its 283 local school districts. The governor said he hopes to release the plan just before or shortly after the Legislature reconvenes in January.

His policy director, Landon Fulmer, has been briefing educators on the outlines of the plan. It would remove limits imposed by the state on local school boards' ability to levy property taxes and permit counties to raise sales taxes to raise money for schools. Fulmer promised the State Board of Education that the governor won't seek to cut the state's spending on

schools or to let wealthy districts get far ahead of poorer ones.

The state has been sued by 32 students, along with their parents and guardians, and the Dodge City, Hutchinson, Kansas City and Wichita school districts. They argue that state funding is inadequate and the money is distributed unfairly. Brownback has said he wants to overhaul the funding formula to avoid future lawsuits.

"We're trying to create a flexible formula here that has multiple options for the finance of education," Fulmer told the state board.

But several board members questioned whether poor districts would be able to raise sufficient funds with property or sales taxes to keep up with wealthier ones. Also, they noted, Brownback is drafting a plan to revise the state's tax system, with his conservative Republican allies in the Legislature and anti-tax groups pushing the state to reduce or eliminate income taxes.

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## Students prepare for school musical

Bailey Terrell (above, left) one of the leads in Colby High School's production of "Brigadoon," sang to Hannah Matchell at the dress rehearsal Monday. Alex Juenemann (right) talked about tailoring while tourists Jayden Bixenman and Connor Schwanke (below) expressed surprise and finding a town not on their map. The play revolves around the two American tourists and the town's mysterious secret. The students will perform the musical at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday at the high school. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for students. They are available now by calling 460-5300.



## Farmers wait for worldwide wheat supply report as Kansas crop thrives

By Roxana Hegeman

The Associated Press

WICHITA — Fall rain has helped get Kansas' winter wheat crop off to a good start, and now farmers are waiting to see what happens today when the U.S. Department of Agriculture releases a report on the wheat supply worldwide.

More attention is being paid to such

reports because wheat prices have been volatile, said Aaron Harries, marketing director for the industry trade group Kansas Wheat. Last month's report depressed wheat prices because it estimated the global grain supply was greater than had been expected for this marketing year.

"The last report surprised people," Harries said.

Although the Agriculture Department reduced its estimate for U.S. wheat production, that was offset by markedly lower exports and lower estimates of the amount being used to feed livestock, ac-

ording to Kansas State University's grain market outlook analysis.

Kansas State University economist Dan O'Brien said analysts expect the November estimate for the world wheat supply to be down marginally.

"We will be watching USDA projections for a lot of the wheat exporting countries — particularly looking at Australia, Canada, watching what happens in Europe in regards to their wheat crop, the Black Sea area — all those things are in play," he said.

Wheat is more abundant in both domes-

tic and world markets than corn and soybeans. One of the things pushing up its price now is the tight corn supply. Most wheat is used for human consumption as flour or other foods, while the majority of the corn grown is used to feed livestock and supply the ethanol industry. But when corn supplies are as short as they are this year, demand for wheat to feed to livestock comes into play.

Corn stocks are at the tightest level they have been since the 1970s, O'Brien said. Although corn production is high, the world harvested a billion fewer bush-

els of corn than analysts had expected last spring while demand remains strong from livestock feeding, ethanol and export markets.

"You have an interaction between the continued tightening of corn supplies and the search for alternative feed stocks, and really that would be wheat," O'Brien said.

The Agriculture Department dropped its projection last month of how much wheat was being fed to livestock domes-

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