



Police chase
purse thief,
search yards

By Steve Haynes
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Colby police sealed off an area around South Chickamauga Avenue and Summit Street this morning after residents reported a purse and a checkbook stolen from two cars. Officers responding to the call saw a man walking rapidly down the street about a block and a half away, said Police Chief Randy Jones, but he disappeared before they could talk to him. As more officers arrived, the chief said, they sealed off the area and began a search, but did not locate the fugitive. They did find the missing purse, he added, its contents scattered on the ground between two houses, but not the checkbook.

Jones said officers were still following up leads. Their search led them to one house in particular, he said. Since they saw no one leaving the area on foot, he said, they assume the suspect went into a building. He said the thefts apparently occurred between 6:30 and 7 a.m. The woman who lost her purse, he said, had parked in the street to run in and check on a family member. She left her purse in the car. "We set up a perimeter," Jones said. "We searched yards and alleys." The two officers on duty responded to the call, he said, as well as the chief and sergeant and two Thomas County sheriff's deputies who happened to be in town. Officers found the purse between two houses in the 300 block of South

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Hear the jazz go down



EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press

Brothers Dryden (left) and Lucas Baumfalk blew Tuesday night at the Pioneer Memorial Library as an overflow audience of about 130 enjoyed performances by the Colby Community College Sunflower Singers and Jazz Band while munching on treats. The library and the Friends of Pioneer Memorial Library

put on the "Chocolate and all That Jazz" event for the second year, not as a fund raiser, but as a way to add something for people to do. "We were really pleased with the turnout," said Debbie Tittel, assistant librarian. "We know it was crowded." She said the staff is looking at ways to improve seating.

More than 350 die as prison fire sweeps through cells

By Freddy Cuevas
The Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) - Trapped inmates screamed from their cells as a fire swept through a Honduran prison, killing as many as 350 prisoners in one of the world's deadliest fires in decades, authorities said today. Some 475 people escaped from the prison in the town of Comayagua and 356 are missing and presumed dead, said

Hector Ivan Mejia, a spokesman for the Honduras Security Ministry. He said 21 people had been injured. Dozens were trapped behind bars as prison authorities tried to find the keys, officials said. Honduran authorities said the fire had been started by a prisoner who set a mattress ablaze in his cell. Outraged relatives of dead inmates tried to storm the gates of the prison this morning to recover the remains of their loved ones, witnesses told the Associated

Press. The crowds were driven back by police officers firing tear gas. Channel 5 television showed dozens of inmates' relatives hurling rocks at officers. "We want to see the body," said Juan Martinez, whose son was reported dead. "We'll be here until we get to do that." Survivors told prisoners that an inmate had lit fire to his bedding, Danilo Orellana, director of the national prison system, told the AP.

"Some of his cellmates said that he screamed: 'We will all die here!' And in five minutes everything burned," Orellana said. He did not identify the man or speculate about his motivation. Leonel Silva, fire chief in Comayagua, a town 90 miles (140 kilometers) north of the capital, confirmed Orellana's account to reporters on the scene. Honduras' overcrowded and dilapidated prisons have been hit by a string of

deadly riots and fires in recent years. A 2004 prison fire killed more than 100 incarcerated gang members in a state prison north of the capital. A fire a year earlier at a nearby facility killed 70 gang members. In 1994, a fire sparked by an overheated refrigerator motor in an overcrowded Honduran prison killed 103 people. Honduran authorities have repeatedly pledged to improve conditions but human

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MARILYN FRIESEN

Rachel Juenemann (at keyboard) got a laugh out of one of her friends' comments during practice before regional competition last week. All five Colby students got "1" ratings and will

go to state competition Saturday in Hillsboro. All are students of Pat Zeigelmeier. Standing were (from left) Abby Friesen, Daniel Myers, Alex Juenemann and Jayden Bixenman.

Players brave weather for state contest

By Vera Sloan
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It would take more than bad weather and postponements to discourage five Colby High School piano students and their instructor, Pat Zeigelmeier. The regional competition for high school piano students had been scheduled for Feb. 4, but bad weather caused a halt to many events throughout state that weekend, including the piano competition at Fort Hays State University. As skies cleared late in the day, Zeigelmeier and her students learned the annual event

could be held the next day, so accompanied by parents, they headed to Hays on Sunday. They weren't disappointed. All five students garnered a "1" rating, the highest possible. The competition drew students from schools all over northwest Kansas. All five now advance to the state competition Saturday at Tabor College in Hillsboro. Taking their place at the keyboard were sophomore Abby Friesen, daughter of Steve and Marilyn Friesen; junior Alex Juenemann, son of Kevin and Donna Juenemann; junior Daniel Myers, son of Steve and Kathy Myers; senior Jayden Bixenman, son of Coleen and Ken Bixenman; and senior Rachel Juenemann, daughter of Steve and Sara Juenemann.

Zeigelmeier said she was pleased the students did so well, noting that they had worked hard to earn the top placings. Three of the five are taking piano for credit at Colby Community College. Joey Nichols, high school music director, said he was proud of all five. "I also appreciate all of them for all the things they do for the music program at Colby High School," he said. "Colby piano students were highest of any of the 24 schools represented," said John Huber of the Fort Hays piano department, who headed up the regional competition. "They all received 100 percent."

Historian to talk about black colony

Nicodemus historian Angela Bates will talk about the last surviving black farm colony during a "Food for Thought" luncheon talk Thursday at the Prairie Museum of Art and History in Colby. Everyone is welcome to attend the free presentation at the museum, 905 S. Franklin Ave. A light lunch will be served, and donations will be accepted. Contact the museum at 460-4590 or museumed@st-tel.net for information. Nicodemus is the only remaining all-black settlement west of the Mississippi, Bates said. Her presentation will cover the slave experience as told by those who endured its horrors and the organized effort to solicit former slaves as settlers and homesteaders in the West. It covers the period from the 1877 migration to Kansas through the Dust Bowl years and Great Depression, and on to Nicodemus' renewed hope through preservation efforts as a National Park service site. She will also touch on African-American settlement west of Nicodemus, including the story of Zelma Hurst Henderson, whose family settled in Thomas County and Oakley. Henderson grew up to become one of the plaintiffs in

the historic Brown versus Board of Education court case that overturned segregation. Bates, a descendant of a pioneer Nicodemus family, is executive director and past president of the Nicodemus Historical Society. She worked with the National Park Service and Sens. Bob Dole and Pat Roberts to have Nicodemus designated as a national historic site, and is completing the second in a series of children's books focused on the history of Nicodemus entitled "Adventures of Nicodemus Annie." "Nicodemus represents the African-American experience in Kansas, the West, and the nation," Bates said. "This story speaks of how they left the oppression of the South and journeyed west to experience true freedom on the free soils of Kansas. "This is a story of people who had a dream and made it a reality. I am blessed to be a descendant of those great visionaries and a steward of their history, legacy, and story." Her presentation, "The Story of Nicodemus," is part of the Kansas Humanities Council's Speakers Bureau.

Swiss to clean up space

GENEVA (AP) - The tidy Swiss want to clean up space. Swiss scientists said Wednesday they plan to launch a "janitor satellite" specially designed to get rid of orbiting debris known as space junk. The 10-million-franc (\$11-million) satellite called CleanSpace One - the prototype for a family of such satellites - is being built by the Swiss Space Center at the

Swiss Federal Institute for Technology in Lausanne, or EPFL. EPFL said Wednesday its launch would come within three to five years and its first tasks are to grab two Swiss satellites launched in 2009 and 2010.

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