



10 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Friday

June 1, 2012  
Volume 123, Number 86  
Serving Thomas County since 1888

## County told storm causes vast damage

By Christina Beringer  
Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

During the end-of-month commissioner meeting Thursday morning, Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan reported that a state of disaster has been declared for the area, as a result of the weekend's severe wind and dust storm. She also hopes the same statement will be made by the governor, based on the disaster assessments she's gathered since the storm.

McMahan said Toby Prine, the northwest Kansas regional coordinator for disaster management, made local assessments Wednesday and surveyed extensive damage in a 16-by-19-mile area from Gem to Levant.

Reports of "snow-like" drifts were reported throughout the area, large enough that Woofter Farms had to use snow plows to get through it all, said McMahan.

"Toby reported that the majority of top-soil loss was found on no-till farms," said McMahan. "And that was very surprising to me."

In addition to recovering from the wind and dust storm on Saturday, residents five miles northwest

of Brewster are also dealing with a tornado reported last night on the Sherman County line. McMahan said she has not yet heard how much damage was caused.

In other business:  
• Commission Chairman Ken Christiansen reported that he has received a lot of praise and appreciation from Thomas County residents who are grateful for the Thomas County landfill being open after the weekend's dust storm.

Christiansen said several requests came in to open the landfill since it was closed for the Memorial Day weekend. He thanked Landfill Supervisor Larry Jumper for sacrificing his holiday break so people could clean up the damage left behind, and shared a note of appreciation from Levant resident Terri Arnberger.

Jumper said that on Tuesday, a record was set for the most amount of material processed at the landfill in one day. He said most of the 280,000 tons was damage debris from the storm. On Wednesday, they reported about 170,000 tons.

"I've never felt so appreciated in my life," remarked Jumper.

In regards to an article published

See "COUNTY," Page 2

## Widow of late state lawmaker to finish term

LYONS (AP) – The widow of the late state Rep. Bob Bethell has been picked to serve the remainder of his legislative term, but she said she will not seek election to seat once the term ends.

Republican precinct committee members chose Lorene Bethell on Thursday to serve in the House until her husband's term ends when the next session begins in January. She will be sworn in and attend the ceremonial conclusion of this year's legislative session on Friday, *The Hutchinson News* reported (bit.ly/KhZvwo.)

Bob Bethell, a Baptist minister and former nursing home administrator, died in a car accident May 20 while returning to their home in Alden at the end of the last legislative session. He had served the 113th District since 1999 and had filed to run for re-election this year.

Lorene Bethell said the appointment is an honor and what "Bob would have wanted."

"He loved that job. He loved working for the people of the state of Kansas," she said.

While she won't seek a full term, Lorene Bethell on Thursday introduced Dr. Tom Simpson, a semi-retired physician in Sterling who filed Wednesday to run in the 113th District's Republican primary.

Bob Bethell and Simpson decided 14 years ago that Simpson would serve as Bethell's campaign manager in his first run for the House seat. Bethell won and easily won re-election every two years. Simpson delivered a eulogy at Bethell's funeral.

The deadline to file for the election is June 11.

The 113th District currently covers all of Rice County and portions of Reno and Barton counties. However, with a federal panel of judges considering redistricting maps, it's unclear what the 113th's boundaries might be when the election is held in November.

Rob Fillion, a Republican who is executive director of the Smoky Hill Development Corp. in Ellsworth, said he is considering whether to run in the race.

## Kansas legislators return for one final day

TOPEKA (AP) – Kansas lawmakers are returning to the Statehouse for the final, ceremonial day of the 2012 session.

The House and Senate adjourned May 20. The ceremonial sessions being held in each chamber Friday are traditionally used for routine measures that close out the year.

This year's regular session produced changes in Kansas tax policies and the pension program for state workers.

But the Legislature failed to carry out one of the year's major tasks – drawing new boundaries for districts of the Kansas House and Senate, the State Board of Education and the four congressional districts.

The job of drawing new maps is now in the hands of a three-judge federal panel in Kansas City, Kan., which concluded two days of testimony on Wednesday.



## Clean up continues

The wind storm that hit Colby Saturday blew debris onto Gary and Caroline Bird's home (above and below), which is located 1 mile north of Colby on K-25. The debris came from the house next door. On Monday, Richard Shutte (right) with JM Tree and Lawn Service fed broken tree branches into a chipper.

CAROLINE BIRD



EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press

## County adopts revitalization, rebate plan

By Christina Beringer  
Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

Plans to adopt a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan throughout Thomas County are now finalized on the county's end, said Economic Development Alliance director Christy Rocca on Thursday, as she received approval during a public hearing at the Thomas County Commissioners' end-of-month meeting.

Rocca said she is expecting inter-local agreements between the county and each of the 37 taxing district boards in Thomas County to be

discussed at public hearings by the middle of July. After which, residents of Thomas County can apply for the property tax rebates through the appraiser's office.

Steele explained that each of the districts has the option to approve or deny the revitalization plan.

If denied, the person or business in the program will not receive a property tax rebate from that particular district, he said. Property tax rebates are only given for an appraised value of at least \$25,000 on new construction and expansion, added Rocca.

After the public hearings take place and the

plan is either rejected or approved in each of the districts, then residents of Thomas County can apply for participation in the program.

Applications can be obtained at the Thomas County Appraiser's office. There is a \$50 administration fee.

"After the construction project is complete," said Rocca. "An evaluation takes place to ensure the valuation is at least \$25,000 and to make sure the property owner has no delinquent taxes."

"The owner must continue to pay their tax-

See "PLAN," Page 2

## Citizens Foundation plans golf fund raiser

By Kayla Cornett  
Colby Free Press  
kcornett@nwkanas.com

The Citizens Foundation of Citizens Medical Center will hold its 22nd Annual Golf Tournament on Friday, June 15, at Meadow Lake Golf Course.

It will be a four-man scramble on nine holes with registration at 8 a.m. and tee off at 9. Cost is \$100 per person, or \$400 per team, if you furnish your own cart. If you need a cart, there is a \$10 fee per cart.

There will also be a "Social Bridge" held from 1 to 4 p.m. that day in the dining room of the clubhouse. There is no registration fee, but a response or reservation

would be appreciated.

At the end of play, the foundation will serve appetizers and a free-will donation and prizes will be given out in drawings.

"We have worked really hard for 22 years to make this tournament an event that people mark the calendar for," said Tama Unger, foundation director. "We pride ourselves in the prizes we give away during the drawings at the end of the day. It is our goal that each prize retails at a minimum of \$50."

"So far this year, for example, we have items from a 32" TV to an Orek Vacuum, to luggage, to a golf GPS."

The funds raised this year will be used exclusively toward the

foundation's \$1.9-million campaign to expand health care services and bring additional providers to our area.

"This is the first time in 30 years that we have asked our citizens for support in an expansion project," Unger said. "Donations to the tournament, or otherwise, will aide in housing Dr. John Dygert, who will join us in August of this year, and Dr. Sarah Gable, Family Practice, and Dr. Kelly Gable, General Surgeon, in August of 2013."

"Citizens Foundation believes strongly in this expansion that will allow northwest Kansas full-time general surgery, and other more advanced medical procedures."

Tournament sponsorship ranges from \$125 to \$1,500 or you can be

a prize sponsor. Sponsors will be featured in promos the day of the tournament and in a listing in the foundation's quarterly publication that reaches every household in the nine-county area.

There is no deadline to register, but the number of teams will be limited.

For information or to register, call Unger at (785) 460-1214, or Barb Ulmer, physical therapist at Citizens Medical Center, at (785) 462-7511, or pick up a registration form at the foundation office in the hospital, 100 E. College Dr.



8 04879 113898