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Sisters sing at concert

The weather was warm and breezy Wednesday for the weekly Picnic in the Park summer concert series. Sara Betz and Isabel Rosales (above) helped serve the audience while the Bug-bee Sisters, Karla and Monica (left), sang in harmony. High Plains Co-op grilled hot dogs for a fund raiser. The proceeds will help pay for this year's Fourth of July fireworks display put on by the Colby Kiwanis Club.

KATHRYN BALLARD
Colby Free Press

Maps drawn place two in 40th district

By Kevin Bottrell
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Maps drawn by federal judges in Kansas City left the state House and Senate districts covering the northwest corner of Kansas with two incumbents, sending the House district that once served Goodland and Colby to Olathe.

Maps proposed in the Legislature would have avoided the head-to-head election matchups, but none of them was ever passed. A fight over control of the Senate between conservative and moderate Republicans left the redistricting process up to the courts.

That means Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, a long-time incumbent Republican from Grinnell, and Sen. Allen Schmidt, a Hays Democrat, both now live in Ostmeyer's 40th District, which shrinks from 17 counties to 13 1/2 but now takes in Democratic-leaning Hays.

The 121st District shifts to Johnson County, where population continues to grow. The 120th, which had run from Cheyenne to Phillips counties along the Nebraska line, now takes in Goodland and Colby, throwing Republican representatives Rick Billinger of Goodland and Ward Cassidy of St. Francis into a primary race.

"This is bad for Kansas," Sen. Ostmeyer said Wednesday, summing up the opinions of many officials toward the redistricting

maps handed down by three federal judges late last week. "I'm tremendously disappointed. We're elected to do this job, and we failed."

While the House had a map done and approved quickly, he said, the Senate didn't even start until late in the session. The process got bogged down in the fight between conservatives and moderates.

When the session ended, several days over the usual 90-day limit, no new legislative maps had been approved. The process went before three federal judges, who issued their opinion, along with new maps, last Thursday.

Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt could appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Billinger said the attorney general hasn't given any indication that he plans to do so.

"I'd love to see them appeal it," he added.

Ostmeyer said he doesn't think the case will be appealed.

Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach has announced that the filing deadline, which was noon Monday, will not be extended, and the primary election will go forward as scheduled on Tuesday, Aug. 7. Across the state, many candidates had to refile and others jumped into races, based on the new maps.

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Vehicle system runs smoother

By Kayla Cornett
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On Monday, the state marked one month of operating with an updated computer system that replaced a 25-year-old mainframe, and problems that plagued the system were reported to be fading away.

The Thomas County treasurer's office had a few issues with the system in the beginning, but Deputy Treasurer Layn Bruggeman said almost all of the kinks have been worked out.

"Of course you always have your little glitches," she said, "but yes, it's getting better."

One task that was causing prob-

lems at the office was transferring a vehicle tag, but Bruggeman said they have figured out how to work around that glitch and it's going more smoothly.

"So far, so good," she said. "We just let the customers know what we need and we work through it."

"I think eventually, it will get fixed and it will work, probably in a year, like it's supposed to."

However, Bruggeman said doing title work on the new system still takes longer than it did on the old system, so people need to allow some extra time.

On the positive side, she said, renewals are quick, depending on

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Bridge on K-25 reopens in Thomas

K-25 south of Colby reopened today as traffic begins to use a new bridge about three miles south of Interstate 70 over the normally dry North Fork of the Solomon River.

The highway has been closed since March 15 as crews from Simon Contractors of North Platte, Neb., demolished an old steel bridge and built a new concrete span. Traffic was routed on an "official" paved detour on I-70 and U.S. 83 to Oakley, however most drivers used an improved township road a mile to the east, running south from the Country Club Drive exit of I-70.

While K-25 is open south of Colby to U.S. 40 in Logan County, it's still closed south of there.

"Although the bridge is now open, the detour for the K-25

pavement replacement job in Logan County is still in effect," said Eric Oelschlager, area engineer for the Kansas Department of Transportation in Atwood, whose office oversaw work on the project. "In other words, K-25 remains closed from U.S. 40 to Russell Springs."

The full official detour still puts travelers onto K-96, U.S. 83 and I-70 through Scott City until the first of July.

Simon's contract totaled \$550,000, said Kristen Brands, public affairs manager for the department in Norton. The project is part of T-Works, the transportation program passed by the Kansas Legislature in May 2010.

For questions, contact Oelschlager at (785) 626-3258 or erico@ksdot.org in Atwood, or Brands at (785) 877-3315 or kristenb@ksdot.org in Norton.



A truck went over the new K-25 bridge, which is about three miles south of Interstate 70 over the normally dry North Fork of the

Solomon River, this morning. The road south of Colby reopened today after being closed since March 15.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

