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## Governor declares state firefighter day

The Kansas Firemen's Association started on Aug. 13, 1887, when a group of firefighters gathered in Minneapolis and organized to build friendship and camaraderie among firefighters from across Kansas.

As of last Thursday, this date will now be recognized as Kansas Firefighter Day. For many years, the primary mission of the association was to hold competitions among firefighters. These included events

like ladder raises, hose coupling and hose cart races.

"In those days firefighters had to travel mostly by rail to the annual event held in various communities across the state," said the association's historian, Sonny Ruff of Logan. "It was a huge commitment of time and devotion for these firefighters to travel and compete."

Over the years, the fire service changed and so did the association – even to the

point that its name got changed to the Kansas State Firefighter's Association – recognizing that it wasn't just the males that were firefighters any longer. The emphasis on events evolved as well.

"While the initial gatherings of the association were centered around competition, there was always an element of training in those events," said association President J.L. Ellis of Colby. "Starting in the 1930s, as firefighting became a more

skill-based occupation, the gatherings began to center around training firefighters to handle the challenges of a modern, industrial world."

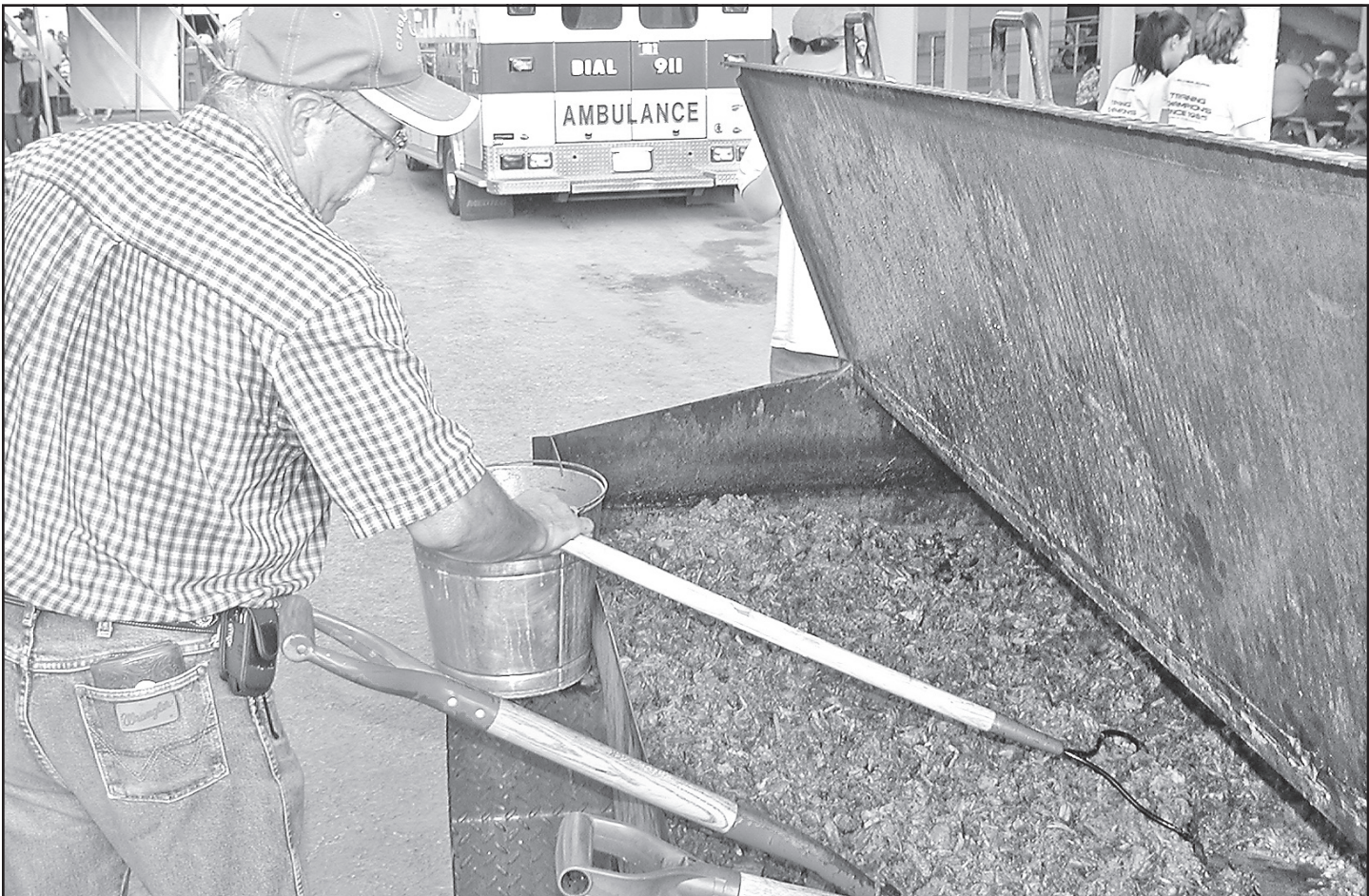
The modern Kansas State Firefighters continues its commitment to the safety and education of the Kansas firefighter by holding regional fire schools each month across the state. At these regional fire schools, firefighters are trained in techniques for fire suppression, rescue opera-

tions and hazardous materials response. This training is free to those that attend.

Today, the association represents all firefighters in Kansas, be they paid or volunteer. It is estimated that there are nearly 16,000 firefighters in the state. The state association will celebrate its birthday at several events next year.

The first celebration will be at the re-

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## Fair board sponsors evening barbecue

Stan Strange (above), Thomas County Fair Board member and 4-H parent, raked the food Wednesday for the barbecue at the Thomas County Fairgrounds, sponsored by the fair board. At right, emergency medical technicians Marlene Pfeifer (right) and Don Morton served food. The High Plains Lions Club, Gem Lions Club and Emergency Medical Services each had a buffet line and assembled plates for everyone.

MARIAN BALLARD and EVAN BARNUM  
Colby Free Press



## Bridge repair planned on road in Decatur

As early as Monday, a job to repair a bridge located on U.S. 83 in Decatur County may begin.

Located about 3.5 miles north of the Sheridan County line, the bridge over the Prairie Dog Creek will receive repairs under traffic control. Work on the bridge includes removing 1.5 inches of concrete, patching the bridge deck and overlaying a new deck surface.

A traffic control lighting system will halt drivers for a brief period of time on both ends of the bridge project. The public should expect to encounter a slight delay while driving through the project and should plan their travels accordingly.

Please use caution, pay attention to the work zone signs and respect workers when driving through any road construction zone. Slow down and "Give 'Em A Brake."

The Kansas Department of Transportation awarded the construction contract – totaling \$293,138 – to Wildcat Concrete Services Inc. of Topeka.

The bridge repair project is funded by T-WORKS, the Transportation program passed by the Kansas Legislature in May of 2010; and designed to create jobs, preserve highway infrastructure and spur economic development opportunities across the state.

Weather permitting, the bridge repair project will be complete by mid-September.

For questions concerning this project, please contact Area Two Engineer Eric Oelschlager at (785) 626-3258 or kristenb@ksdot.org in Norton.

## College trustees review state forms

The Colby Community College trustees held a special meeting Monday morning to review the state budget forms, approve a resignation and approve contracts for an admissions counselor and a General Educational Development examiner.

Alan Waites, vice president of business affairs and chief financial officer, told the trustees that all state budget forms have been completed and are ready to be filed.

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## Drought intensifies on Plains

By Jim Suhr

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS – Extreme drought conditions have spread in several Plains states, but recent rainfall has slightly reduced the overall area of the lower 48 states experiencing some form of drought, according to the latest U.S. drought map.

Nearly two-thirds of the lower 48 states is experiencing some drought, although recent storms pushed the percentage down to 62.91, from last week's 63.86, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor map posted today on its website.

The survey, based on conditions as of Tuesday

morning, found that the area experiencing extreme drought – the second highest classification behind exceptional drought – rose nearly 2 percentage points from the previous week, to 22.3 percent. This was due largely to a worsening of conditions in parts of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

The area facing exceptional drought also increased, from 2.38 percent to about 3 percent.

Some areas benefited slightly from rains that "will settle the dust" but still won't be sufficient to salvage parched crops, National Drought Mitigation Center climatologist Brian Fuchs said by phone from the

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## Immigrants create money for prisons

By Garance Burke  
and Laura Wides-Munoz

Associated Press

MIAMI – The U.S. is locking up more illegal immigrants than ever, generating lucrative profits for the nation's largest prison companies, and an Associated Press review shows the businesses have spent tens of millions of dollars lobbying lawmakers and contributing to campaigns.

The cost to American taxpayers is on track to top \$2 billion for

this year, and the companies are expecting their biggest cut of that yet in the next few years thanks to government plans for new facilities to house the 400,000 immigrants detained annually.

After a decade of expansion, the sprawling, private system runs detention centers everywhere from a Denver suburb to an industrial area flanking Newark's airport, and is largely controlled by just three companies.

The growth is far from over, despite the sheer drop in illegal immigration in recent years.

In 2011, nearly half the beds in the nation's civil detention system

were in private facilities with little federal oversight, up from just 10 percent a decade ago.

The companies also have raked in cash from subsidiaries that provide health care and transportation. And they are holding more immigrants convicted of federal crimes in their privately-run prisons.

The financial boom, which has helped save some of these companies from the brink of bankruptcy, has occurred even though federal officials acknowledge privatization isn't necessarily cheaper.

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## Country showdown



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Kit Boyington of Goodland sang Wednesday night during the Texaco Country Showdown held on stage in the arena at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Eight musical acts competed, and four, including Boyington, were named semi-finalists for the contest. These four were narrowed down to one band, Tucker's Town, who will compete today in Goodland for the state title.

