



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Young entrepreneurs



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Annie Morris (right) and her friend Kinlie Miller stood at their lemonade stand in front of her parent's business, Fotogirl Photography, on Tuesday morning, to raise money for the Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation.

Firefighters lend a hand at ranch fire

By Kevin Bottrell

The Goodland Star-News
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A tanker from Thomas County and a sheriff's deputy spent Wednesday evening helping fight a large pasture fire on the Sherman-Wallace County line. The fire was finally out early Thursday morning but crews were still hunting down hotspots.

The fire began about 5 p.m. Wednesday on the T-Bar Ranch, about seven miles west of K-27 on the county line. The fire quickly burned a large swath of pasture land and crop stubble in both counties.

The Sherman County Rural Fire Department had been paged to a second fire at the same time, a small but out-of-control blaze near a structure at County Roads 21 and 59. That fire was put out quickly, and firefighters redeployed to the T-Bar Ranch, where Wallace County firefighters were already trying to control the fast-moving fire.

At least one farmstead in the area was damaged.

Throughout the evening and into the early morning hours, fire trucks and tankers from the Good-

land, Kanorado, Brewster, Thomas County and Cheyenne County fire departments were put to work. Farmers brought out disc harrows, used to churn up burnable material to make fire lines, and Goodland businesses supplied their tankers. At least one plane dumped water on the fire.

The Sherman County Sheriff's Office and county emergency management personnel helped provide water and food for the firefighters. The Thomas County Sheriff's Department had a deputy on scene to help look for hotspots. Ambulances from Goodland and Sharon Springs were on standby.

The volunteers fighting the blaze were hampered by the terrain, which had deep gullies in many places, and the weather. A cold front that moved through only produced trace amounts of rain, but it brought sustained winds up to 23 mph and gusts up to 30. Because of the wind and the dry conditions, the National Weather Service had issued a notice earlier in the day of severe fire danger.

Firefighters had the fire under control, but the conditions helped it flare up several times at several different locations during the night.

City getting closer on sidewalk grant

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press
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The city is coming closer to learning if federal money will help it make walking and bicycling to school safer.

Colby has put in one of 16 applications for four federal grants of \$250,000 through the Kansas Department of Transportation to help with remodeling work to provide safer walking and bicycling routes to school. Members of a coalition working on the grant, including Sue Evans, Director of the Northwest Kansas Council on Substance Abuse; Megan Carmichael, Safe Routes to School coordinator; Thomas County Healthy Communities Coalition, Colby Grade School Principal Lance Krannawitter, city Public Works Director Omar Weber and Interim City Manager Randy

Jones, met with state officials July 31, showing them the routes which the city had laid out for bicycling and walking to school.

The other cities in the mix are Rose Hill, Humboldt, Independence, Baxter Springs, Fort Scott, Olathe, Overbrook, Salina, Hugoton, Holcomb, Kinsley, Hillsboro, Chanute and Kansas City, which put in two applications.

"They took a tour of the route in question, just look and see how difficult it would be to get this route to comply with their guidelines," Weber said. "We don't know anything and won't know anything until they decide who's going to get the grant."

Becky Pepper, bicycle and pedestrian coordinator with the department, and one official who visited Colby, said decisions haven't been made yet. A lot of the process, she said, would depend on "how well the proposed plan encompasses what we call the five E's."

These are education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation and engineering, she said.

The money, Pepper added, is meant to go primarily towards engineering improvements such as extending and creating sidewalks, painting and signs marking bicycling or pedestrian areas and pavement curves at intersections.

A big part of the process, Pepper said, involves awareness from the public.

"It would be through their public participation," she said, "developing routes that the public would use as part of their safe routes to school."

Carmichael said that the city has tried to encourage community participation.

"A big part of being able to get the grant is

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Gem postmaster picked to head Oberlin office

A Gem woman and longtime postal worker has been named postmaster in Oberlin.

Phyllis Ziegelmeier is commuting from her home in Gem, where she lives with her husband Pete. She has been working for the U.S. Postal Service since 1987, starting right at home.

"I started my career as the postmaster relief in 1987 in Gem," she said. "Then I became the postmaster of Gem, then the officer in charge of St. Francis, then came back to Gem again, then the postmaster of Selden, and now I'm (in Oberlin)."

"The Postal Service has changed a lot over all these years. Mostly it's a lot more technology, but it hasn't made it any easier."

Ziegelmeier, a native of Hanover, Colo., said she has lived in Gem since the couple married in 1980. Outside of work, she

enjoys playing with her grandson, Nash, who just celebrated his first birthday in July.

She is the mayor of Gem, population 85, and a member of the Lions Club, which will be holding a hog roast Wednesday that she says everyone is invited to.

The Ziegelmeiers have one son, Pete Jr., 31. They raise cattle and farm. She said she's always been a small-town resident and loves the lifestyle.

"I like the atmosphere of a small town," she said. "It's where people watch out for each other and care about each other."



P. Ziegelmeier

Feds push Kansas to revise teacher evals

By John Hanna

Associated Press

TOPEKA — Kansas has until next spring to revise how it evaluates teachers so that they're judged partly by how well their students score on standardized tests, education officials told members of the state school board Tuesday.

The federal government is pushing for the changes by making them a condition for waiving key provisions of No Child Left Behind, the law enacted a decade ago requiring all students to be proficient in reading and math by 2014. With its promise to pursue the revisions in teacher evaluations, the state obtained the waiver, giving Kansas greater flexibility in measuring how well their students are being taught.

Kansas Department of Education officials told State Board of Education members Tuesday that a commission of teachers and administrators plans to start work in September on proposals for revising teacher evaluations. Though changes wouldn't take effect until fall 2014, the commission is expected to make its first report in December, so that board members can approve revisions next year.

"We have the course of this school year to figure that out," said Judi Miller, the department administrator who oversees the

state's effort to comply with the federal law.

Kansas typically has left decisions about how to evaluate teachers to its 286 local school districts, but the state board can set guidelines and review districts' plans. Traditionally, teachers have been judged based on issues such as acting professionally, having orderly classrooms and following academic standards.

The state began pilot programs last year in 17 districts to test new methods for evaluating teachers and administrators, focusing, for example, on how well teachers know the subject they teach and how flexible they are in dealing with students of different abilities.

But Education Commissioner Diane DeBacker noted that none of the projects incorporated students' scores on assessments.

"There's still work to be done," DeBacker said.

The U.S. Department of Education has granted No Child Left Behind waivers to more than 30 states, including Kansas in June. Otherwise, as 2014 approaches, an increasing number of students must be proficient in reading in math.

Educators see the targets as increasingly tougher to reach, while

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Eye-catching ad



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

A Taco John's employee, who declined to give her name, stood outside the restaurant Wednesday morning advertising free breakfast burritos. The store gave away one free breakfast burrito for every customer from 7 to 10 a.m. on Wednesday.

Corn prices may hit record highs this year

By Stephanie DeCamp

The Oberlin Herald
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The U.S. Department of Agriculture released a report Friday that it expects record high corn prices this year due to the widespread drought. The department cut its estimates for the crop by 17 percent and raised forecasted prices by 39 percent to \$8.90 a bushel, which won't hurt local farmers growing corn much, but will affect those raising livestock.

"The effect locally," said Greg Lohofener, an Oberlin economic consultant, "will be on livestock producers, which will mean a lower price for calves due to the cost to feed those calves over the winter. They will be affected the most by increased cost and less revenue. For grain producers, it

shouldn't be a big deal."

Crop insurance could be the saving grace for most farmers as the markets adjust to the national disaster. Lohofener estimated 95 percent or more of area farmers have crop insurance.

"One of the main reasons is a lack of production," he said. "Because of that, they're showing the record high prices, and we won't be left out of that. But if the farmers have crop insurance, the high price combined with insurance coverage could mean most farmers will net about the same amount of money as they thought they might when they planted the crop in April or May."



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