



# Fun, food, fellowship

Mallory Champa (above) sat and played guitar during a jam session Thursday evening at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Blake McLemore raised his bass high (above right) to give audience members some shade, as musicians warmed up before the start of the session which preceded the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival, running today through Sunday. Haley Kistler (right) added her fiddle playing to the mix after a potluck supper for the players and their fans, where Larry Booth (below, left) and Wayne Bossert chatted.

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# Games need volunteers

With the Thomas County Fair fast approaching, the fair carnival, especially the games portion, is still desperately short of people to run it.

Wanda Brown, a volunteer for the Thomas County Amusement Association, which runs the fair, said that 109 of 140 volunteer slots for the fair games are still open. The "Ball of Chance" only has four people signed up to run it, and no one has volunteered for the Duck Pond. Brown said this situation is normal, but she does not mind using guilt to get people to run the games as well as use them.

"They need to realize that these rides and games won't be running if they don't come out and help,"

Brown said. The games will be open from 6:45 to 11:15 p.m. from Tuesday to Saturday, July 30 to August 3. Two people work side by side to run them, from 6:45 p.m. to 9, then from 9 to 11:15, meaning four people need to sign up each night.

The prize booth, meanwhile, involves a large group of volunteers giving out prizes and running around to get them. It needs twice as many volunteers at least four people per shift.

To sign up as a volunteer, call the Thomas County Chamber at 460-3401, or call Kerry Wark, 443-6174; Damon Glover, 443-3254; or Tina Harris, 462-8008.

# Concealed carry law confounds county

By Heather Alwin  
Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkansas.com

Thomas County is still working through the details of the state's new concealed carry law as it applies to public buildings and employees. At the County Commissioners' meeting Monday, County Attor-

ney Kevin Berens discussed some of the law's nuances with the commissioners.

As of July 1, county employees can carry concealed weapons during work hours, said Berens. The county's current policies prohibit "unauthorized" carrying of weapons but weapons are now authorized since the county chose to open its buildings for licensed concealed carry.

Berens said county employees must comply with all concealed carry rules, such as not carrying in City buildings, the hospital or other unauthorized areas. If employees violate concealed carry rules, they could be disciplined. He recommended the county make these responsibilities and consequences clear to all county employees.

"If they're going to carry, they need to comply with the law," said Berens. "If you choose to concealed carry, that's your choice, but you must obey all the laws that go along with that."

Additionally, Berens recommended the county remind employees that the county does not assume responsibility if an employee's weapon gets stolen from a coun-

ty vehicle. The county's policy book currently states the county is not responsible for personal property stored in county vehicles.

Berens said courts have the power to limit concealed-carry access, and District Judge Glenn Schiffner issued an admin-

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# Pickin' on the Plains and fairgrounds take on a new look

Attendees at Pickin' on the Plains may notice a new look to the festival this year.

The orange snow fence, previously used to divide the grounds from the parking area, has been replaced by a new wrought iron fence installed by the Thomas County Fair Board. The new, permanent fence will save a lot of work for the festival's grounds committee, which used to spend a significant amount time putting up and taking down the snow fence.

The grounds crew is also relieved they will not have to put up their big tent this year. Instead, the festival will rent two large tents from Colby Canvas for the first time, adding to the new look.

The tents, joined in the middle so they will cover approximately the same area as the previous multi-dome tent, will be ten feet high at the side to help air flow within the tent.

The tents will save on labor efforts as well as increasing protection from the elements.

"It got to be a little windy for us at one point," said Bob McLemore, "and this one should

be much more sturdy. We had to reattach the tarps (on the old tent) a time or two and I just feel better about the whole thing."

The previous tent, designed by J.F. Stover of Hill City, was constructed from bent PVC with a protective tarp.

"The tent served us well for many years, over 10 for sure, but our awnings were needing replaced and it was a two-week project to put up," said McLemore.

The festival is also adding extra water misters to cool guests. There will be a fine mist under the tent along with ground mis-

ters placed around the outside. They can be turned on or off as needed.

"It's a self-regulation temperature and volume control under the tent," McLemore said. "If you're too hot, you move closer to a mister; if you get wet, move further away. Same way for sound. We try to set the volume to get the best sound for the majority of the tent, so if it's too loud, move back a bit. If you can't hear well enough, move closer to the stage."

Festival representatives encourage those who are bothered by the daytime heat to take in the



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A new entrance sign is just one of the changes made in fixing up the Thomas County Fairgrounds. For more photos and the story, see Page 5.

evening shows. Following the shows, attendees are welcome to stay and pick or just listen to the jam sessions.

