

Company breathing new life into ethanol plant

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Construction began in July of that year. However, in 2008 all construction stopped, and the local group began looking for companies to sell to or partner with. Two years later, NextGen began looking at the facility, making the purchase earlier this year and partnering with local banks to help with the financing. Since then it has been readying the ethanol plant for production. Johnson said the plan is to have the construction done by September, after which the plant can begin testing the equipment. It should go into

full production by December, he said. Johnson said the company had been looking for a facility like the Goodland Energy Center, something close to completion that the company could finish and get working. "That's our expertise: troubleshooting," he said. "Figuring out how to make these places work." When NextGen bought the facility, the ethanol plant was about 90 percent complete. However, Johnson said, the company has brought in a lot of new equipment in the main battery, including the distillers

and the distillation tower, replacing used or outdated equipment. When it is up and running, the plant can produce more than 30 million gallons of ethanol a year. The ethanol will mostly go into the Denver market, while some 200,000 tons of distillers grain, a byproduct of the ethanol production process that is used as cattle feed, will be marketed locally. Johnson said one of the reasons the Goodland area is a prime site for an ethanol plant is because there are so many feedyards around. The other reason is the availability of

corn. The plant will need more than 16 million bushels of corn, and Johnson said the plan is to buy it locally. Johnson said the plant will employ about 50 people. Twenty of those jobs will be engineering positions with good pay and benefits. Johnson said the plan is to hire locally for many of these positions, and the company may partner with a college for training. The company may also look into completing the biodiesel and power plants, but getting the ethanol plant online is the priority. The power plant would be the more

difficult of the two to finish, Johnson said. "We'll look at all that," he said, "but one step at a time." Johnson said the company has had great cooperation from the city and county, especially getting access to the records needed to set up power and water and help complying with local, state and federal rules. "We couldn't be more happy," he said. NextGen is based in Brooklyn, Mich. Johnson said it has taken over an old Ford plant and remodeled it as company headquarters and a research site.

Tornado spotted north of Brewster

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were not running at the time of the power outage and had to be started. Gerber said the link to Sunflower Electric was fixed that night. Things were worse elsewhere. Winds in Colby reached 82 mph. Windows were broken around town, power went out, and the new city pool suffered damage. Blowing dust hampered visibility. The wind and dry weather carried with it a high risk of quick-spreading fires. One was reported at the Timmerman Feedyard at Halford, about 9 miles east of Colby. Hay bales had caught fire

and threatened several buildings. It took Thomas County firefighters until 6 a.m. Sunday morning to put out the last of the bales. Farther east, several semi-tractor rigs were blown over on I-70 when their trailers were caught in the wind near Ogallah. Shortly after midnight Sunday morning, a truck was blown over on I-70 near the Levant exit. There may be more thunderstorms this weekend. The weather service is predicting a slight chance of showers and thunderstorms Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Otherwise the weather is expected to be mostly sunny with highs in the 80s and 90s.

Company still interested in grocery store

The president of a Denver-based supermarket chain says the company is still committed to opening a store in Goodland, but the road to get there has been a rocky one. "We sincerely want to open a store in Goodland," said Sam Mancini, president of Bella's Market. "We have worked for two years on it and have spent over \$125,000 in the effort." During that time, he said, the first bank that had approved the company loan for the project was taken over by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. A year later, the company was able to get into a new bank, which met the city commission and submitted a letter stating their commitment to funding the deal. "Literally two weeks later, their charter was downgraded by the State Regulatory agency and they were subsequently unable to fund our project," Mancini said. "We are now exploring

equipment financing to fund the project, along with our already committed equity capital." Mancini said the city has been nothing but generous, giving financial help, but they have seemed impatient with the company's efforts. "This is common with the private vs. public dilemma," he said. "We simply can't work any faster than we are." Part of the problem, he said, is that Kansas does not have the same kind of programs that Colorado does to help businesses with financing. Local banks don't have enough capital to make loans this large, and the company is too big for Small Business Administration loans. "A full service store like the one needed in Goodland, Kansas will require \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million of investment," Mancini said. "There is no way to do it for less. When you start to cut corners, you suffer in other ways."

Mancini's estimate includes purchasing used equipment where possible. He said the company is not trying to build an expensive market with expensive fixtures, as demonstrated by plans supplied to the city. Mancini said the company remains committed to opening a store in Goodland. "We have two groups looking at our financing," he said. "However, we have no guarantees. The challenges bankers face can't change until Washington gets their heads out of the rears and realizes that 'main street' creates more jobs than the larger companies will ever create. It's a shame that Washington doesn't support businesses like ours and subsequently, communities like Goodland." City officials said they are committed to bringing the issue to a resolution.

State to begin repaving 13-mile stretch of K-27

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Use caution, pay attention to the work zone signs, and respect workers when driving through any road construction zone. The department awarded the construction contract - totaling \$412,868 - to Heft and Sons L.L.C., of Greensburg. The pavement resurfacing project is funded by T-WORKS, the transportation program passed by

the Kansas Legislature in May of 2010. Weather permitting, the construction work will be complete by June 8. For questions concerning this project, please contact Area Two Engineer Eric Oelschlager at (785) 626-3258 or erico@ksdot.org in Atwood; or Northwest Kansas Public Affairs Manager Kristen Brands at (785) 877-3315 or kristenb@ksdot.org in Norton.

Hays Fly-In to feature Amelia Earhart on Saturday

The search for Amelia Earhart can finally be called off! The famed aviator will be talking about her thrilling flights in two performances at 9 am and Noon Saturday, June 2, at Hays Regional Airport's 3rd Annual Great Planes on the Great Plains Fly-In. Scholar/performer Ann Birney of Ride into History will take the audience back to 1937, just before Earhart's disappearance over the Pacific Ocean. Birney's performance is being sponsored by Midwest Energy, EnerSys and the Fly-In Committee. Most people do not know that Earhart set out twice to fly around the world at the equator before she disappeared. The first time, heading west from California, she wrecked her twin-engine Lockheed Electra taking off from Hawaii. Birney, as Earhart, will take the audience to April 14, 1937. Earhart is waiting for her airplane, her silver "flying

laboratory" to be repaired so that she can try again. This time, she tells the audience, she will go east instead of west, hoping to reverse her luck with the reversal in direction. Earhart came into the public eye when she became the first woman to cross the Atlantic Ocean by air in 1928. The young social worker presumed that after the flight she would resume working with children at a Boston settlement house, but one book and innumerable speaking engagements later, she was instead planning more record-setting flights, and yet more speaking tours, books, and articles. Among her other records, she became the first woman and second person to solo across the Atlantic, the first person to solo over the Pacific, the first person to fly from Hawaii to California, and the fastest woman to fly non-stop across the U.S. And now, Earhart feels she has one last record-setting

flight left in her . . . Ann Birney is a member of Ride into History, an historical performance touring troupe that has performed throughout the U.S., from the Smithsonian to Saipan. Scholar/performer Birney's interpretation of Amelia Earhart is based on extensive research. Birney holds a doctorate in American Studies from the University of Kansas and, like Earhart, is a native Kansan. Birney has been doing her Chautauqua-style performances of Amelia Earhart since 1995. In March of 2000 she became the first person to do an historical performance for the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, where she was described as "what living history should be - accurate, natural, evocative, and accessible." Birney's performances are part of day-long Fly-In activities that begin with a 7 am pancake breakfast and

includes military aircraft and displays; Rocket Club display; Seatbelt Convincer demonstration; Dunk Tank; Motorcycle, Classic Car and Hot Rod Show and judging; Remote Controlled Aircraft Show (weather permitting); airport fire truck water demonstrations; Ident-a-Kid; a paper airplane building workshop; and much more. The Fly-In concludes with a hot dog lunch from 11 am - 1 pm. Free parking and shuttle services from the parking lot are provided. Drawings will be held for free Great Lakes Airlines tickets and other prizes. All events are free and open to the public. A free will offering is accepted for the meals. Additionally, helicopter rides over Hays are available for \$35 per person from 7 am to dark.

Brewster student selected to attend June youth conference in Washington D.C.

TOPEKA - Brewster student Will Allen has been selected by Midwest Energy to attend the 52nd annual "Government in Action" Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., June 14 through 21. Electric cooperatives from around Kansas have selected area students to send to Washington, D.C., along with 1,500 other high school students from 45 states. After applying, the students go through a selection process that entails anything from tests about electric cooperatives, to essays, to interviews with a panel of judges. Students will have the opportunity to visit the U.S. Capitol, the memorials of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Luther King, Jr., tour the Arlington National Cemetery and

the Smithsonian museums. They will also meet with Senators Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran, and the Kansas Congressional Delegation during their visit to D.C. The Youth Tour was inspired by Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson when he declared at a national electric cooperative meeting in 1957, "If one thing goes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents." In 2004, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc., joined up with Hawaii's Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative to give four high school students from Hawaii the opportunity to take part in the Youth Tour and travel with Kansas students to our nation's capital.

Shana Read, Director of Communications at KEC, has helped organize the partnership between the two states from the beginning. "We were delighted to accommodate the Hawaii delegation as

part of our youth tour," said Read. "The students were so excited to get to know each other and it was a great experience for everyone." The annual youth tour is coordinated by KEC, the statewide service

organization for the rural electric cooperatives in Kansas. Formed in 1941 and headquartered in Topeka, KEC represents the interests of and provides needed services and programs to the electric co-ops that

serve in Kansas. Today, KEC serves 29 distribution electric cooperatives and three generation and transmission electric cooperatives providing electricity to over 200,000 Kansas households.

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