

weather
report

41°

noon Thursday

Today
•Sunset, 6:03 p.m.
Saturday
•Sunrise, 5:41 a.m.
•Sunset, 6:04 p.m.

Midday Conditions
•Soil temperature 39 degrees
•Humidity 82 percent
•Sky cloudy
•Winds northwest 17 mph.
•Barometer 29.78 inches
and steady
•Record High today 84° (1998)
•Record Low today -6° (1965)

Last 24 Hours*
High Wednesday 36°
Low Wednesday 30°
Precipitation none
This month .02
Year to date .054
Normal 1.75

The Topside Forecast
Today: Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of snow after midnight, high near 40, low near 27, winds east northeast 8-11 mph.
Saturday: Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of snow, high around 41, low around 26, winds northeast 11-14 mph.

Extended Forecast
Sunday: Mostly sunny, high around 56, low around 32.
Monday: Mostly sunny, high near 72.
(National Weather Service)
Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.
* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local
markets

Noon
Wheat — \$3.08 bushel
Posted county price — \$3.16
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Corn — \$1.82 bushel
Posted county price — \$1.83
Loan deficiency pmt. — 12¢
Milo — \$1.54 bushel
Soybeans — \$5.52 bushel
Posted county price — \$5.54
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Millett — \$5.25 hundredweight
Sunflowers
Oil current crop — \$9.85 cwt.
NuSun — \$10.85 cwt.
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Confection — \$19/\$13 cwt.
Pinto beans — \$25
(Markets by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

inside
today

More local
news and
views from
your
Goodland
Star-News



Kansas Kids
head to state

Coach Terry Bahe showed a wrestling move to Cy Paxton (light shirt) and Coy Johnson during Kansas Kids practice Wednesday at Max Jones Fieldhouse. The Goodland club is headed to state this week. Story, photos on Page 12.

X-Pressos take Branson by storm

By Kathryn Burke

The Goodland Star-News

A four-day trip to Branson, Mo., gained the Goodland High School X-Pressos an eighth place spot and the "Fame" award for good sportsmanship and attitude.

"The kids did very well," said Randy Berls, choir teacher at the high school.

The 20-member show choir, eight parent sponsors and Berls left Goodland at 5:30 a.m. last Thursday and drove almost 12 hours to their hotel for the Branson National Invitational Show Choir Competition.

The X-Pressos started getting ready for the competition four months ago, right after they finished the school's annual musical.

Berls said he encourages the students to get some kind of physical activity while training for the show. He said a 20-minute dancing and

singing number requires stamina that some of the students had to build.

Show choir is a for-credit class, Berls said, and he sees the students for 84 minutes twice a week and for 47 minutes on Monday.

Students try out for a spot in the choir and are judged on their dancing, acting and singing skills.

"It's pretty competitive," Berls said. "I had 77 try out for those 20 spots. I pick who I think would be the best to represent Goodland."

The choir is made up of 10 girls and 10 boys with five each tenors, sopranos, altos and bases. Eight of the members are seniors, eight are sophomores and four are juniors.

For the competition, Berls said, students had 30 minutes to set up the stage, perform and tear down the stage. He said that leaves about 20 minutes for the actual performance.

The students sang five songs, "Joyful, Joyful," "For Good," the girls on "Big Spender," the boys "A Little Less Conversation" and the choir ended the show with "You Can't Stop the Beat."

For the show, Berls choreographed four of the songs and Jessica Kennedy put together the moves for "You Can't Stop the Beat."

Students starting in robes that they shed to reveal their performance costumes, gold dresses for the girls and black pants white shirts and gold vests for the boys. Berls said the boys went offstage during the girls' song and changed into hip hop gear for the third costume change.

"It was a little nerve wracking," said senior Grace Langness. "It was a lot of fun."

The X-Pressos were the smallest group in the competition with only 20 members. Berls said

the next smallest had 44 and the largest had 70.

In Kansas, he said, a show choir is limited by the Kansas High School Activities Association to 24 or fewer singers.

"Kansas is not a show-choir friendly state," Berls said, adding no other Kansas school were in national competition this year and there is no state competition in Kansas.

He said the team competed against schools from Illinois, Wisconsin and Missouri.

"All of the groups besides us had one or more professional choreographers," he said. "Most of these people choreograph for Broadway shows and Miss America pageants."

After the show, Berls said, the choir got to meet with one of the judges to discuss areas for improvement. He said the clinic should help them in the future.

Family, friends worried about missing man

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Star-News

A Goodland family is missing their son.

Friends are worried about a young man they say wanted to get his life together and who had plans for the future.

Rumors have put the young man in Mexico, in Denver and in jail, but no one has been able to find him — not his family, not his friends, not the police.

The family wants answers; they say no one they consider reliable has seen their son in nearly a month.

Marco Ault Sr. and Yvonne Ornelas say nobody has seen Marco Ault Jr., since Saturday, Feb. 26.

Ornelas, his stepmother, said this is strange because he always told his roommate where he was going and when he would be back, but this time he didn't. He had \$800 cash on him, but he didn't take any of his things.

After he disappeared, she said, his roommate let the family into his room, where they found a bank receipt showing he had withdrawn \$400 cash. He also had a \$400 tax return check that he cashed.

Marco turned 19 on Tuesday, March 15, his step-mother said. Not only wasn't he home for his birthday, but he hasn't called anyone since he disappeared. His new cell phone hasn't been used since Feb. 26, she said; she called the phone company to ask.

Ornelas and Ault Sr. hope to hear from their son or, at least from someone who has information about him. If anyone knows anything, Ornelas said, they should call the Goodland Police Department at (785) 899-4575 or call her at home, 890-8363.

The missing youth is about 5 foot, 6 inches tall and weighs about 135 pounds. He has tattoos on his forearms, Ornelas said, one that says,



Marco Ault Sr., Yvonne Ornelas and David Ault wonder where their son and brother is.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News



Have you seen this man?
Marco Ault Jr.

"No," the other "Fear."

Ornelas said her stepson was straightening his life up. He was on probation, she said, because he was accused of vandalizing a truck. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time, she said, but he was paying for the damage and never missed a meeting with his probation officer,

Kathy Russell, until his disappearance.

Russell said she couldn't comment on the case, because any information about a probationer would be confidential. Ault's court file says the charge was criminal damage to property, a misdemeanor, on May 20, 2004. His last payment was made Feb. 22, and he has a balance due of \$887.

He never missed work at Wendy's and was saving his money, Ornelas said, and he nearly had his high school diploma from the Goodland Community Learning Center. He didn't finish high school in Denver.

"He wanted to know if we were going to his graduation ceremony," she said. "Why would he leave?"

Another thing that's strange, Ornelas said, is he didn't take anything with him. Marco is very particular about his appearance and likes to be clean and well-groomed, she said.

"Why wouldn't he at least take a

comb, toothbrush and razor?" she asked.

She finds it hard to believe he would leave all his clothes behind.

"I love him," she said, "but he's materialistic. He loves his clothes."

A friend, Monica Ford, said Marco had been staying with her and her son Adam, 17, for two weeks. Marco and Adam were attending classes at the learning center, Ford said, and helped each other with school work.

Marco talked constantly about getting things straightened out, Ford said, and getting his life back on track. He wanted to go to school and learn a trade.

He had some friends who were pretty sketchy, she said, but he had stayed clean; he never drank around her.

Ford said she was giving him a chance to get things together. It would have taken two or three months for him to pay things off, she

said. He owes about \$800 in fines, Ornelas said, and would have been off probation when it was paid.

"I'm shocked that he was just gone," she said, adding that when he hadn't come home by Sunday, Feb. 27, she was worried. She started calling his friends and asking about him.

Monday, Ford said, she went to the police to file a report and talked to his mom and dad. She said she also called all the hospitals in the Denver area, including the suburbs, and no one had anyone come in by Ault's name or fitting his description.

"I hope he's all right," Monica said. "I just find it odd that he's gone like that, especially with the plans he had."

He had a paycheck at work he didn't pick up Monday, probably about \$300, she said, and that isn't like him. He liked getting his checks, she said.

Ford said she wants Marco to at least call her and let her know he's OK.

The young man is listed as a missing person, said Police Chief Ray Smee, but he's an adult. If police somewhere stop him, they would check on his welfare and make a report.

"We haven't been able to find him," Smee said. "Unless we get a lead, we have nowhere to go."

Ornelas said his family has exhausted their leads, too. Marco doesn't have a car, she said, and didn't buy a bus ticket. She said the family has contacted all of his friends they know. Ford gave them his old cell phone, and they called all the numbers stored in it.

She said they weren't sure where Marco's mother was when he disappeared.

See MISSING, Page 9

Rainfall misses Goodland, falls east of city

By Kathryn Burke

The Goodland Star-News

Goodland missed a much-needed rainfall by less than 20 miles, as Brewster and Colby got more than four times the amount of rain we had here this week.

Starting shortly after midnight Monday, the skies opened up and dropped rain on northwest Kansas from the Colorado boarder all the way east to Hays, which had more than 3 inches.

Logan Johnson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service here, said Goodland got 0.12 of an inch, with a trace falling Sunday, 0.10 of an inch Monday and 0.02 on Tuesday.

Just east of town, he said, Brewster reported half an inch and Colby roughly the same.

The storm left Goodland 1.21 inches below normal for the year. Since January, 0.54 inches has fallen in town compared to the normal 1.75 for this time of year.

"Luckily, this is a dry time of year anyway," Johnson said, noting that less rain in a wet month like June would cause more damage.

In January, only 0.09 of an inch fell, 0.34 below normal. In February, Goodland measured 0.25 of an inch, roughly half of the normal 0.44. The normal to date for March is 0.88, and so far Goodland has seen 0.20 of an inch, 0.68 below normal.

Johnson said this was the 15th warmest and driest winter on record, even though the season started well.

"It followed the wettest fall ever," he added.

The weekend rain started, he said, when a low pressure system over southeast Colorado drifted into southern Kansas and the Oklahoma panhandle and collided with a warm front east of Goodland. He said storms popped up along the front and poured heavy rain over towns east of here. Oberlin reported more than 1.5 inches, while Norton and Hill City had more than 2 inches.

"We were just really unlucky," Johnson said, adding that Hays reported 3 inches of rain over the

three-day period. "If there was anything remarkable, it was how little rain we got compared to farther east. We were just so close."

The storm started early Monday, he said, with rain and then switched over to a mixture of rain and snow as the day went on. He said snow didn't start to stick to the ground until after dark.

Although the office had forecast the rain and snow before Sunday, he said, there was little danger and they didn't issue any warnings.

"Because it was so warm, it didn't stick to the roads," Johnson said.

Sunday's high was close to 60 degrees, he said, but temperatures Monday held in the 30s and Tuesday

the high was 38 degrees.

The weather service has forecast a 30 percent chance of snow tonight and the high should be in the 40s. Temperatures will climb for the weekend, reaching the 60s by Sunday with no chance of rain.

Johnson said the long range forecast for April, May and June calls for an equal chance of above normal or below normal precipitation.

Egg hunt
Saturday

Kids won't have to worry about getting wet at the town Easter Egg Hunt at 10:30 a.m. Saturday because organizers have a back-up plan.

Karen Duell of S&T Communications, an egg-hunt volunteer, said in case of bad weather, the hunt will be moved from Gulick Park to the Goodland Activities Center.

Participants will be split into age groups, 1 and 2 years old, 3 and 4, 5-7 and 8-10, to hunt for eggs. After the hunt, they'll get to meet the Easter Bunny.

See CROPS, Page 9

Spring crops suffer from lack of moisture

By Kathryn Burke

The Goodland Star-News

Even with the recent rain, a dry winter has put some Sherman County wheat fields in jeopardy.

"It's a pretty serious situation," said county extension agent Dana Belshe. "The wheat's been starting to stress."

He said with warm, dry weather the past few weeks, some wheat is showing moisture stress, signs of a bluish coloration and shriveled, less

robust leaves.

The problem, he said, starts with a lack of moisture in the subsoil.

Although the crops started out well this year, with one of the wettest fall seasons on record, he said, the subsoil is still dry.

"We started off with good moisture," he said. "We had good topsoil moisture, not good subsoil."

Belshe said getting good moisture into the root zone is essential for a good crop. The more rain a crop

gets, he said, the more water can be percolated through the soil and stored in the root zone.

"Any kind of moisture we get is good," the agent said. "We need moisture to maintain this wheat and get it to grow."

The past few wetter, cooler days, he said, have helped to relieve the stress and prevent more damage.

Crops in areas around the county that had more rain, he said, are doing OK with the extra moisture.

"They're dodging the bullet right now" Belshe said. "It really helped them out."

He said farmers who didn't get much moisture may be in trouble. "A tenth of an inch doesn't go very far," he said.

Belshe said the majority of wheat grown in the county is on dry land. Farmers using irrigation depend on rain to help cut pumping costs.