

Music, activities fill weekend in Colby

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

This event comes with strings attached. The 11th annual Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass festival begins 6 p.m. today at the Thomas County Fairgrounds in Colby.

An informal kick-off was held Thursday featuring a community potluck at the fairgrounds. The festival ends at 3 p.m. on Sunday.

Committee member Jo Booth said the event has grown, with new groups added and the return of familiar favorites.

"We have several new groups," Booth said. "This is the most groups we've had."

Three of the 11 groups at this year's festival are making their Colby debut. They are the Abrams Brothers from Canada, Bonham Revue from Oklahoma and Ozark Alliance from Missouri.

Returning are Spontaneous Combustion, Hot Strings, the New Old-Timers, the McLemore Family, Sappa Strings, Larry Booth, Sons and Brothers and the Pearce Family.

Also returning is Marshal Allen Bailey, the host of "Western Swing and Other Things" on High Plains Public Radio, as the emcee for the festival.

The music will run from 6 to 10:45 p.m. today. Saturday's events start with a youth contest at 9:30 a.m., followed by open stage at 10:30. Shows begin at 11:30 a.m. and run through midnight.

Sunday, a gospel show and sing-along will run from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., followed by shows to 3 p.m.

Booth said the Abrams Brothers could be a popular draw at the festival. Specializing in bluegrass gospel music, the group, from Ontario, Canada, has performed at the Grand Ole Opry. The group comprises 15-year-old John, who plays fiddle and mandolin, 12-year-old James, their father Bryan and grandfather Wayne.

The brothers broke into the Canadian music scene in 1999 when they were 9 and 6. They also have an album on MasterShield Records.

Bonham Revue from Oklahoma consists of Virgil and Glen Bonham, who have performed bluegrass for 31 years and released 18 albums.

Ozark Alliance from Salem, Mo., won the Youth in Bluegrass competition at Silver Dollar City in Branson, Mo., and has been performing since 2002.

Among the returning performers are Colby's McLemore Family and Larry Booth.

The McLemores, Bob, Susan, Blake and Brandon, have performed at Silver Dollar City. They have played as a family for nine years. They, along with Booth, have also played Colby's Picnic in the Park and other local events.

Returning with a mix of bluegrass and gospel is Sons and Brothers. From Westcliffe, Colo., the group was selected as the top group



The band Spontaneous Combustion fired up the audience at last year's Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass festival. The group is return-

ing to this year's event, which begins Friday and runs through Sunday.
Photo by Tisha Cox/The Colby Free Press

at the 2004 National Bluegrass Playoffs at the Huck Finn Jubilee in Victorville, Calif.

Pickin' On the Plains includes other activities, including children's crafts, vendors and food booths, as well as horse-drawn

wagon rides.

The "Smokin' on the Plains" barbecue cookoff Saturday will be sponsored by the Great American Trails radio show.

There will be a 4,000-square-foot shaded, water-cooled space for the

audience during the concerts.

Booth said many people will be camping out again for this year's festival. Last year, 92 campers from out of town were at the festival. Booth said they're counting on that many again this year.

"That's the way it is at bluegrass festivals," she said. "It's really cool because you meet new people that way. The event could not have grown without the support of the community and area."

Candidate to visit voters on Saturday

Republican gubernatorial candidate Robin Jennison of Healy will spend Saturday in Oakley, Sharon Springs, Goodland, St. Francis, Atwood and Colby.

In each city, he will be meeting with residents at coffee shops, senior centers and main streets. Jennison will be visiting with entrepreneurs, highlighting the opportunities for developing business and creating jobs in rural Kansas.

"It is necessary for the next governor of Kansas be exposed to the concerns of the entire state rather than catering to the interests of a few," Jennison, a former speaker of the Kansas House, said. "This is why I have spent my campaign listening to citizens from all 105 counties in Kansas, and why I will continue to spend the rest of the month on the road, visiting with people and listening to their stories."

Pickup rolls on I-70

A Colorado woman going home in her pickup went off I-70 about 8.8 miles west of Goodland on Thursday, sending the driver and three children in the car to the Goodland hospital. A 9-year-old girl had to be flown to Denver.

Trooper Joe Greene of the Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Enedina Arreola, 34, Aurora, was going west about 7:30 a.m. when the truck went off the road, rolled twice and ended up in the median.

Greene said the driver was taken by ambulance to the Goodland Regional Medical Center and released. Her passengers, Eric Madera, 13; Adilena Madera, 6; and Yesenia Madera, 9, also went to the hospital. Yesenia Madera was flown to Childrens Hospital in Denver and has been released.

All were wearing seat belts except Yesenia, Greene said. The vehicle was towed by Alex's Radiator.

corrections

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Steakhouse has grand opening

By Pat Schiefen

The Goodland Star-News

A project three years in the planning got off to a rocky start but is gaining clientele. The Goodland Steakhouse and Diner, behind Taco Johns west of K-27, has its grill open from 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. seven days a week.

Owner Tom Blair, originally from Benkelman, Neb., said they are still working on getting signs and landscaping done.

The opening was delayed because the diner delivered was not the one ordered from Diner-Mite Diners of Atlanta. The company builds ready-made diners that come with grills, coolers and other equipment. The Georgia company ships the diner in pieces and assembles it.

His partner in the venture a friend of 28 years drowned July 21, 2005, also slowing things down, Blair said.

Blair said he is in the process of moving to Goodland. His wife, Rosemary, is a radiology technician for Dund County Hospital in Benkelman and will join him. At the restaurant's grand opening on Monday, he bragged about a new grandson born in Olympia, Wash., last weekend.

The diner employees from 25 to 26 people, Blair said. Peggy Witzel from Kanorado is the kitchen man-

ager with Colleen Smith as book-keeper and Brenda Smith as Blair's right hand.

"The local people have supported us terrifically," said Blair. "I have an excellent wait staff."

The diner serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Blair said they specialize in steaks for dinner. He said he is thinking about serving breakfast from 10 p.m. to midnight. The diner has seating for 120 people, 80 in the front and 40 in the bar, where smoking is allowed.

Blair owned a bar and restaurant in Benkelman for four years before opening his diner in Goodland on Tuesday, June 6.

"The Fourth of July weekend was a really busy weekend," he said. "People had to wait for 20 minutes to be seated in the afternoon and evening."

"If you have a problem about the food, come see me," he added. "I'm the complaint department."

He said about the only thing he has heard is that they serve large portions.

People need to realize that the diner is not a fast-food restaurant, he said. It takes 20 minutes to cook a steak, so we have a big salad.

"You'll not find a better meal between Kansas City and Denver," Blair said.



Tom Blair, owner of the Goodland Steakhouse and Diner, talks to people at the grand opening on Monday afternoon. The diner can seat 120 people, 80 in the dining room and 40 in the bar area where smoking is allowed.

Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

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