



COLBY FREE PRESS



PATTY DECKER/Free Press Editor



Oops!

Two round hay bales fell from an unidentified truck late Saturday afternoon blocking east and westbound traffic on U.S. Highway 24 about three miles east of Colby. Thomas County Undersheriff Jason Moses directed traffic after finding someone to move the hay off the roadway. According to Moses, the owner of the hay was nowhere to be found after the incident at around 5:20 p.m. Clean up took about 15 minutes once help arrived.

Field fires keep firefighters busy over weekend

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Fireworks and lightning lit up the skies this past weekend, but on four separate occasions, firefighters from Thomas County were called out to deal with Mother Nature's wrath or carelessness.

The first incident, said J.L. Ellis, fire service officer, happened Saturday at about 10:15 p.m. south of Levant in a field full of wheat stubble. The cause of the blaze is still under investigation, but lightning is suspected.

Two more incidents were reported on Sunday with the first near Cornerstone Ag on County Road Q. Ellis said firefighters responded at 8:35 a.m. to put out some trash that was ignited by fireworks.

On Sunday evening at 9:10 p.m., firefighters were called to another field fire, this time near Tom Jones farm.

After arriving at the scene, witnesses reported seeing lightning strike a field of uncut wheat on Jones' ground and the blaze spread quickly with the winds gusting that

night. Earlier today, firefighters were again called out on a fireworks-related incident involving a dumpster filled with used fireworks trash.

The dumpster, located near Hutfles Construction on E. Pine Street, had regular trash inside along with fireworks' remnants.

Ellis believes that the fire was able to reignite itself from the "smoldering" fireworks that were not quite extinguished before being thrown in the dumpster.

In addition, the Kiwanis Club wanted to remind everyone that due to weather Monday night, they will be back at the fairgrounds tonight in hopes of setting off the public fireworks display around 10:15 p.m.

Should weather conditions change and another postponement is necessary, said Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief and Kiwanis member, then the display will be held until after the Thomas County races on Sunday. The approximate time would be about 10 p.m.

For questions, call any Kiwanis member or Dickman at 460-4454.

Injury accident Friday

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Two teenage girls traveling on Interstate-70 near the east exit 54 by Colby were injured Friday afternoon when their vehicle veered off the road, sideswiping a second car, overcorrecting and then rolling twice, landing on all four wheels.

Larissa R. Swanson, 17, of Cincinnati, Ohio, was the driver of the 2002 Chevrolet and the second vehicle, a 2004 Ford, was driven by Charles J. Bonneville, 31, of Theriot, La. Kansas Highway Patrol officials said the accident happened at 1:51 p.m. when Swanson said she was in the inside lane and

accidentally went off the road.

In trying to overcorrect, Swanson sideswiped Bonneville's car and while attempting to avoid hitting the Ford again, she overcorrected and went sideways in the median, rolled two times and landed on all four wheels in the eastbound lane.

Both Swanson and her passenger, Kathleen T. DeWitt, 16, of Sharonville, Ohio, were taken by Thomas County ambulance to Citizens Medical Center where they were treated and released.

Bonneville reported no injuries.

All three were wearing seatbelts, officials said.

Colby School board approves purchase of new vehicle

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Money was on the agenda at the Colby School Board's meeting Thursday morning.

The board approved the purchase of a four-wheel drive Ford Excursion from Tubbs and Sons Ford in Colby in the amount of \$31,010.96. Janel Andrews, secretary to Superintendent Kirk Nielsen, said the second and high bid was from Taylor Motors in Colby for a four-wheel drive Chevy Suburban for \$31,122.

The board had solicited bids on two separate occasions before Thursday meeting but each time,

they didn't meet specifications.

"Maybe the third time is the charm," said board president Stan Molstad.

The board also approved the republishing of the 2004-2005 budget after a public hearing on the issue. District financial officer Jo DeYoung said in order to get \$37,000 more from the state for special education, the republishing of the budget was required.

Also, the board approved end-of-year budget transfers.

DeYoung said once that's complete, they will have a better idea of what they'll have left over for the

2005-2006 school year.

The board also discussed technology upgrades. Phil DeYoung, district technology coordinator, said he divided the project into two phases to save the district some money.

The project will cost \$76,000 total, but he was asking the board to set aside \$25,000 this year for the first phase and take care of the rest next year.

He told the board the district's network, which was put in nearly 10 years ago, needs upgraded to expand bandwidth, or the amount of data that can be transferred.

DeYoung explained the network is the "backbone" for all the district's computers and new switches are needed to keep up with newer technology. Internet use and Internet-delivered curriculum need the technology in order to keep pace with changing technology.

One example he gave is the district's accelerated reading program. This year, it will all be Internet-based. If they don't do the upgrades, he said they'll have to cancel their order for the reading program and if they delayed a decision on the issue, and then decided to go ahead, they wouldn't get

equipment until August.

Another issue at hand is the state assessments, which students in the district took by computer this past year. DeYoung said Colby did so voluntarily, but this year, online assessments are mandatory.

To address the issue, the board will be having a special meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, July 7.

In other business, the board approved:

- The hiring of Ashley Cox as grade school paraprofessional.
- The resignation of food service employee Kimberly Williamson.
- Approved out of district student

requests for the following students to attend school at Golden Plains in Rexford for the 2005-2006 school year and receive transportation from Golden Plains: Kelton and Kylie Jones, Brett, Rilee, Grant and Hailee Spresser, Levi, Candee, Drew and Tucker VonLehe and Michael Wilson.

• Allow Michael Downing of Rawlins County to attend school in Colby this fall.

• Went into executive session for 15 minutes to consult with district legal council John Gatz. No action was taken when the meeting reopened to the public.

Museum open despite road blocks

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

These days, it's a little harder to get to Colby's Prairie Museum of Art and History, but the museum is still open despite direct access being temporarily unavailable.

Museum director Sue Taylor said because of road construction on Franklin, visitors are having to take "the long way around." She said they're having to take Country Club Drive to the frontage road, then that

to Franklin instead of taking the more direct route once exiting I-70. "Direct" usually means Range to the frontage road then Franklin to the museum.

"It's been that way for a couple of weeks," she said.

Taylor said tourists don't seem to have any problems with the inconvenience but locals seem to have more issues with the road work. The road work is having an affect on people who decide to come to the

museum on the spur of the moment.

She hopes the work goes quickly because it could have a potential impact on a big event the museum will have a part in next month.

The Colby all-school five year reunion is Aug. 11-14 and the museum will be hosting an exhibit entitled "High-Flying Eagles" featuring 23 teachers and alumni who are being honored for their accomplishments. For more information on the museum, call 460-4590.

Menlo addresses could become problem

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County commissioners found out there's an issue with how houses are addressed in Menlo.

Jim Engel, emergency management director, told the group at their Thursday meeting there's a problem with addressing in Menlo that could be a potential disaster.

He said the whole town has been redressed but it was never voted

on by the city council.

"They have great liability," Engel said, because if anyone made a call for an ambulance or law enforcement, the physical address and what shows up in the computer might not match so responders could potentially go to the wrong location.

He said he would "gladly" help the city with the issue.

Evans told him to talk with mayor Brent Ginther and the city council there to see what can be done.

Engel also told the commissioners about a new program he would like to get going in the county. He said he would like to send letters to businesses in the county to see if they have storm shelters and then give identification stickers to those places to put on their doors or windows.

He said it would let people know where there was an emergency shelter they could use during business hours in case of a storm.

Governor's visit



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Kids Port children Andrew Schields and Colton Davis visited with lead teacher Jeanette NewJoye and Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius this morning. The children were sharing their Fourth of July activities with the governor, who was in Colby as part of her tour of rural communities this week.

