



COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

Lightning strike, storm wreaks havoc

By Colby Free Press staff

Although some residents in town lost power from a storm that started Monday night and into Tuesday, the situation was even worse for Colby's Fred and Marvia Miller who were shocked about what the storm did to their house at 545 S. Court.

The Millers were out of town for the day and came home to see the damage a lightning strike did to their home.

"It was a amazing it didn't burn the house to the ground," Fred said.

The lightning hit a tree in their backyard. Fred speculated the strike was strong enough to kill the tree. But that was not the only damage. An electrical meter on the outside of their house was destroyed.

The strike damaged their underground water sprinkling system. Water leaked from the pipes and flooded most of their backyard.

"Water ran all day," Fred said.

Inside the garage, a breaker box was destroyed and was dangling from the wall.

Components inside the box were found throughout the garage floor. Above the box were various flammable materials.

An electrical outlet cover in the kitchen was found yards away on the other side of the room. Fred speculated the strike was strong enough to have damaged the house's entire electrical wiring. A television was destroyed. He also

fears a computer was destroyed.

A display made of glass in their living room fell to the floor and broke. Other items hung walls fell and broke. Miller said his neighbors reported difficulty with telephone reception. An S&T Communications representative was not available this morning to comment.

Power outages

Rick Carter at the city's power plant said Tuesday that due to the high winds associated with the storm, tree limbs in the 1000 block of West Seventh Street fell on power lines causing the outage.

Homes near those power lines and others east lost power at 12:30 a.m. and by 3 a.m., Carter said, electricity was restored.

Mike Albers, the city's technology director, said the peak wind was 38 mph Monday at 10:50 p.m.

Tornado damage

Two tornadoes caused damage in and near Thomas County Monday.

Jerry Killingsworth, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said the first caused damage five miles southeast of Brewster.

A grain bin was destroyed and there was some minor home and tree damage.

It was reported at about 8:50 p.m. Monday.

The second was 13 miles south-southeast of Atwood. The tornado was an EF1, which is at the lower end of the scale. Tornadoes are rated



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press



LEFT: The power and heat from a bolt of lightning Tuesday morning damaged the Colby home of Fred and Marvia Miller. The strike destroyed an electrical breaker box in their garage and burned a portion of the wall it was attached to. The underground water sprinkling system was also damaged causing water to flood their backyard. ABOVE: A tree in their backyard was hit by the lightning.

0-5 on the amount of damage the cause.

The tornado tore the roof off a house, six power poles were snapped and there were damaged outbuildings reported.

An accurate time was not reported, but Killingsworth said the second tornado was later than the first, and occurred between 9 and 9:30 p.m.

Damage surveys are being done,

but wet conditions and flooding have made it difficult.

They are also looking for signs more than the two tornadoes happened.

"We think there were more torna-

does, up to a half-dozen," he said.

The probable tornadoes started at Sharon Springs, and went along a line northeast to Herndon.

"This one storm produced a family of tornadoes," he said.

Country Club votes in favor of public golf course

By John Van Nostrand

Colby Free Press Publisher

The Colby Country Club administration is letting the others play through.

After a unanimous decision in December, the club board of directors approved to convert the golf course into a public course, rather than a private, members-only course.

"We have opened the doors to everyone," said club board president John Sears. "This will allow more traffic."

An informal grand opening was held Wednesday in cooperation with the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

That additional traffic will see a new name at the club too. The club is now called Meadow Lake Golf Course and Restaurant. Sears said the original course was named Meadow Lake.

Sears said, since October the board has

been discussing and researching the benefits and drawbacks of getting away from the traditional country club format, which goes back to the course's beginning in the late 1930s.

"As a private club with a liquor license, it eliminated any advertising," Sears said.

Because of the legal restrictions, Sears said it was tough growing the club's publicity. That was tough to deal with knowing Colby's situation with travelers and Colby being a destination in northwest Kansas.

"There are 600 to 700 hotel rooms every night here," he said. "And we were not meeting our potential."

Under the country club, there were incentives attracting out-of-town residents to play.

The club had been used for various events including a Kansas State University

event with football coach Ron Prince, but the board knew those kind of events were limited in number because of the country club format and the club's publicity.

Sears said board meetings eventually involved the 23 stockholders of the club.

"How can we make this better for us and for the community," Sears said.

Sears said the club has what Colby people, and some of the travelers through town, are looking for.

"We have a great restaurant. It has a quiet atmosphere and linen tablecloths," he said. The facility will be available for wedding receptions, business meetings and other social functions.

But don't forget the golf.

Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau director Leilani Thomas said golf has become an important part of tourism.

"We always put all the golf courses in our

tourism information," she said. "When people pack their luggage, it's always the golf clubs that are first to go in."

Sears said the country club has a longterm lease with the city of Colby for about 13 acres of land the golf course sits on.

That lease did not change during the change to a public facility.

"The city is still our partner with this," Sears said.

Both the city and course officials are researching what it would take to increase the golf course from nine holes to 18.

"We would love to have an 18 hole course," he said. "But under a country club we were not eligible for grants."

Sears hopes grants could be awarded through the city to pay for the increases for nine more holes.

"We would love some expansion. Our

course is in beautiful shape," Sears said.

Colby Mayor Ken Bieber supports the club's switch to a public entity.

"We want to see it succeed," he said. Bieber said city officials are researching the needs to increase the course to 18 holes.

"We are just exploring right now," he said. "We will need to find the property and the grants and funds to pay for it."

No action has been taken. Thomas agrees.

"In order to be real competitive and to have real good tournaments, it needs to be an 18-hole course," she said.

Exactly which direction the course would go to be an 18-hole course has not been determined.

"I hope the course succeeds," he said.

The club's board will continue under the new format. Sears has served as president the past seven years.

Country artist to perform Friday

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Like one of his first hits, Daryle Singletary's concert in Colby could prove to be

"Too Much Fun." The country artist will perform at 7 p.m. Friday at the Colby Community Building.

The concert is part of his tour to support his latest release, "Straight from the Heart." It is his sixth album.

The Cairo, Ga., native has a traditional sound that harkens back to the roots of country music. Singletary grew up singing gospel music, but he didn't think he could make a career out of that genre.

"There was more for me in country music," he said. "I love the soulfulness of it."



Singletary

Moving to Nashville was only an idea until a buddy of his moved to the city.

"It made it easier for me to come up here and get into the business," Singletary said.

"I felt the cards fell into place for me to be here."

He made the move in October 1990, the year he graduated from high school.

Before moving, he had never been on an interstate by himself. However, moving from Cairo, with a population of almost 7,000 people, wasn't a big shock.

Singletary signed his first contract with Giant Records, a spinoff of Warner Brothers in 1994.

"It wasn't very long at all," he said.

His self-titled debut included the hits "Too Much Fun" and "I Let Her Lie."

Now on independent label Shanachie Records, Singletary said the new album has been doing well. The disc includes covers of some of his favorite classic country songs,

and a song he wrote.

Examples are his own rendition of his favorite Randy Travis song, "Promises," Keith Whitley's "Miami, My Amy" and "I Still Sing this Way," which Singletary wrote.

The songs reflect his musical roots.

"I love traditional country music," he said. "I'm a huge fan of that. That's what I wanted to do."

He hopes people recognize some of the songs, and if they don't, will be a new experience. He made the move to Shanachie because it offers some advantages the big Nashville labels don't, such as more creative control.

"You still have control," Singletary said. "I got to pick all the songs on the new record."

He said he is looking forward to playing Colby. It is one of many stops that will take him across the nation all summer and into fall. Singletary's next stop after Colby will be Cheyenne, Wyo., and after that, a variety of festivals and fairs.

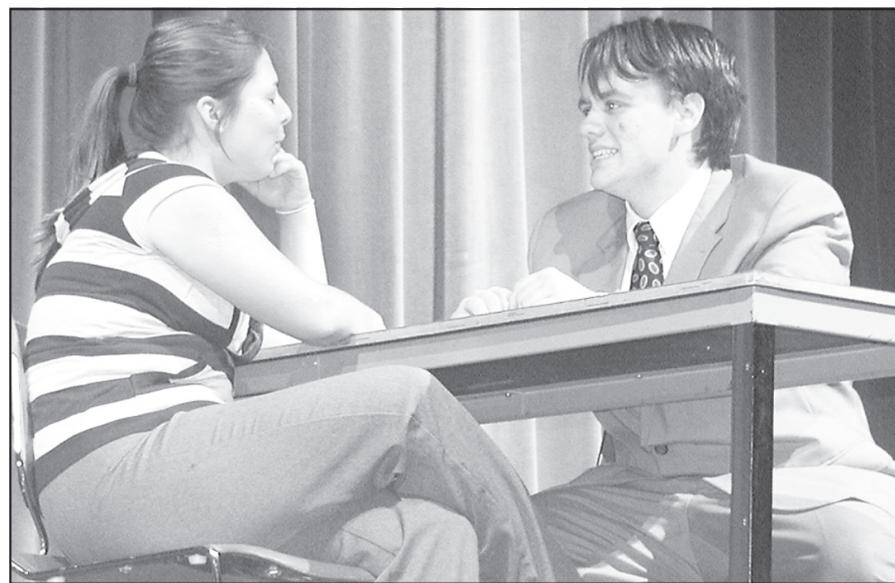
"We don't mind going," he said.

our farm and ranch customers."

Moran told The Associated Press on Tuesday that while he was pleased FSA modified its plan, he continues to believe the agency should wait until the Farm Bill is done before making a final decision about office closures.

"I oppose the closing of any office in Kansas and do not believe there is significant savings in the closing or consolidation of offices," Moran said.

Scripted scenes



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

ABOVE: Sammi Tolle, left, and Curtis Fulwider, right, performed their duet "If I Could Script a Date" during the Colby High School forensics open house Monday at the School. RIGHT: Courtney Ress, left, and Porscha Selley did their duet "Scorned." The forensics team is headed to the state tournament and festival.



Farm Service Agency revamps proposal

WICHITA (AP) — Facing mounting opposition, the Farm Service Agency has revamped its initial proposal to close offices across Kansas.

FSA, a U.S. Department of Agriculture agency that handles federal crop payments to farmers, has instead decided to keep three of the 11 targeted offices open. It also modified its plans to restructure others.

The changes came in the wake of public hearings in the affected coun-

ties that drew more than 1,400 people and elicited criticism from Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., whose district encompasses western Kansas. "We certainly appreciate those in the communities that provided alternatives and recommendations," FSA State Executive Director Bill Fuller said in a news release announcing the changes. "This input was very helpful as we modified the initial plan in ways that would improve convenience and better serve