



8 pages

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## Summertime ... and the livin' is easy *(that is, if your car works, your trees have branches and winter's behind you)*

Staff

Colby Free Press

Today is the first day of summer. Highs are expected to be in the mid 90s. Kids will be swimming at the pool. The roar of lawn mowers will be heard across town.

Odd as it sounds, if you look close enough, you will be able to look back in time — five to six months ago — when Colby was blanketed with nearly two feet of snow, ice and temperatures were celebrated when they reached the freezing point.

“We are still seeing it,” said Ryan Imhof, service manager at Taylor Motors.

The snow, which 19 inches fell New Year's Day weekend, began to accumulate through January and February. The snow, ice and ruts caused cars and pickups to bounce like a pinball down the streets and roads.

The work orders for front-end alignments, suspension repair and other related work at Taylor Motors started to increase.

“We started seeing it after the streets got bad,” Imhof said. “We started seeing a good share of that kind of work.”

It was not just the mechanical parts of vehicles Imhof and his staff were ordering. Imhof said as those cars and pickups bounced over the snow-carved ruts in the streets or hit

the drifts along the ditches, parts of cars would snap off.

“We are still replacing front-air dams and stuff like that,” he said.

Now, in late June, and those repairs still being made doesn't surprise Imhof at all.

“Some just put it off and waited until they can afford to do it ... or until it was safe to do without doing it again.”

### Snow crop

When the snow fell in January, those in agriculture were forecasting a wonderful wheat crop because of the abundance of moisture.

Brian Olson, area agronomist with the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby, said deep winter snows were a help and a hindrance.

“There's good and bad wheat in some fields,” Olson said.

Some early-maturing wheat did not develop a deep root system. He attributed that to good subsoil moisture. Because moisture has built back up in the soil, some plants did not grow deep roots.

Dry conditions over the past five or six years have forced root systems to grow deep to find moisture. That also gives a plant a good stand.

Areas where there was heavy snow cover also caused problems. The damage is random. Despite that, harvest could be decent.

“There's some good decent



COLBY FREE PRESS FILE PHOTO

A truck was stuck in the snow near the Oasis Travel Center in Colby following the New Year's Day weekend blizzard that blanketed western Kansas. Even though the snow is gone and truck drivers don't have to maneuver through snow today, the effects of winter are still visible today.

wheat in the area,” Olson said. “There is some good looking wheat with good yield potential.”

Another positive aspect from the

winter snows are how that moisture will benefit summer crops. Corn, grain sorghum and sunflowers are all off to good starts. They are do-

ing well now, but dry conditions in July and August could affect grain yields.

“There will be forage, but not

much grain,” Olson said.

### Moisture good for trees

Last winter's heavy snowfall may have played havoc on vehicles, streets and roofs, but for trees, it was a welcome sight.

Marvin Bickner, a member of the city's tree board, said the moisture was a good thing. Tree board members were glad to see the moisture last winter and it's evident in the size of trees around town.

“The trees showed more growth this spring than previous years,” he said. “Most trees grew four to six inches and it was because of the heavier moisture.”

Even though a lot of tree limbs fell during the winter snowstorm, Bickner said he thinks that would have happened regardless.

“A lot of the trees that died or lost limbs were diseased or already dead and it's part of the natural process of thinning out,” he said.

The city's tree board has hundreds of trees growing near the Colby Municipal Airport.

One way the tree board responds to the needs of the city is by replacing dead or dying trees on public property or adding trees where none exist. A recent project that will benefit visitors to this year's Pickin' On the Plains Bluegrass Festival was the planting of trees on the Thomas County Fairgrounds to provide shade.

## Rust highlights wheat tour

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Wheat harvest is only days away, but farmers are already thinking about what to plant this fall.

The annual wheat plot tour Tuesday showed off wheat varieties available for planting. Sponsored by the Thomas County Extension Council, the tour was held at the Mike Brown farm south of Levant.

Farmers can gauge the properties of the new varieties, and use the information they gain to help decide what they will plant in September. Diann Gerstner, Thomas County extension agent, said 25 people attended.

“That's a good turnout for Thomas County,” she said.

Brian Olson, area agronomist with the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby; Dan O'Brien, with the extension center and Jim Shroyer, an extension wheat specialist from Manhattan, were featured speakers.

Gerstner said they talked about all aspects of the wheat plots — how the ground was prepared, strong points and weaknesses and the present condition of the growing wheat.

“People can look and see how the wheat is doing,” she said. “The condition varies from year to year depending on the weather.”

All of the varieties were planted and grown under dryland conditions. Most of the test plots had hard red winter wheat, but there was also

some soft white wheat planted.

Rust is more prevalent this year, Gerstner said, and how and when to treat it was discussed.

“We found it and looked at it,” she said.

O'Brien said most of the species planted were established and new varieties. Some of the newer types were Post Rock and Fuller. Older varieties discussed were Jagalene and Jagger.

He said treating for wheat rust is something farmers do not usually do, but as the disease becomes more widespread, they will have to treat for it.

O'Brien was also happy with how the event turned out.

“Mike Brown did a good job of hosting the tour,” O'Brien said.

## Truck stop decisions postponed

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Decisions about water and sewer extension requests for the proposed Bosselman Truck Center at exit 54 on Interstate 70 were tabled during the Colby City Council meeting Tuesday.

City employees and representatives from Bosselman Contractor Services met June 6 to discuss location of existing utilities and water pressure concerns in that area, said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong.

At that meeting, Armstrong said Todd Lorenz with Olsson Associates, an engineering consulting firm in Nebraska, talked about the

possibility of a gravity sewer service to address the pressure problem. Armstrong said that if the complex were to go with the gravity sewer service, no lift station would be required.

Although the item was scheduled for more discussion and possible action, Armstrong said she hadn't heard anything further from Bosselman's representatives.

In addition, the council reviewed the 2006 audit provided by Brian Staats with Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball, the accounting firm hired by the city.

“We received a clean audit and I wanted to thank Debbie Zerr and her crew for their excellent work,” Armstrong told the council.

In his presentation, Staats said the city's financial records were strong, adding the general operating fund had just over a six-month reserve.

“The city is well protected with that kind of reserve funds,” he said.

The audit found no violations and the long-term debt was relatively small in comparison to other cities about the same size as Colby, Staats said.

During the review, Staats said he was glad to say there wasn't much that needed improving; however, he did indicate the city needs to look at a better tracking system for its capital assets.

“The city records are in very good shape,” he said.

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MICHELLE MYERS/Colby Free Press

Bill Summers, center, performed along with the McLemore twins, Blake and Brandon, on Wednesday at Picnic in the Park. The audience was also served hot dogs by the Kiwanis club and Hi-Plains Coop.

## Amateur Radio Week concludes with 24-hour competition Saturday

Michelle Myers

Free Press Intern

When disaster strikes and communication is unobtainable, amateur radio operators are called in for rescue.

As part of Amateur Radio Week (June 18-24), local amateur radio operators will again host their annual Field Day at 1 p.m., Saturday, in the terminal building at the Colby Municipal Airport's Shalz Field.

“The annual field day is a climax to the recognition week and will include members of the Trojan and Sunflower Amateur Radio Clubs of Colby and Goodland,” said Bruce Frahm, member of the Colby Trojan Club.

Local ham radio operators will have a

chance to use their ham radio skills through a 24-hour competition with other clubs nationwide, he said.

More than 20,000 hams from 1,000 clubs, primarily in the North and South America and also from around the globe will be competing.

One of the rules for the competition is hams can only use emergency power supplies to construct at least three emergency stations.

Printed material will be available and tours will be given to explain what is going on and probably offer the chance to make contacts with the help of a coach, Frahm said.

The objective is to get the most points by exchanging information with as many par-

ticipating clubs.

The competition will also serve as a test for equipment and procedure in case of an emergency.

New to ham radio this year, Sherman County deputy Brad Parker said that he's looking forward to seeing and participating in this “real world” exercise.

“The competition is officially de-emphasized, but a lot of the clubs (including ours) are wanting to score well,” said Frahm. “Results will be out in October and there will be bragging rights.”

Since the competition is unofficial, the main purpose is emergency preparedness and training with 15-20 hams planning to attend the Colby event.

“The public is most cordially invited to

come, meet and talk with the hams. See what modern amateur radio can do,” Frahm said.

### History

For 75 years, amateur radio operators, called “hams,” have provided emergency communication to disaster areas and have proven to work without the use of phone systems, internet or any other form of communication that could be compromised in a critical situation.

“The communications networks that ham radio people can quickly create have saved many lives in the past months when other systems failed or were overloaded,” said Allen Pitts of Hoxie, member of the National Association for Amateur Radio. Pitts said he has been involved in ama-

teur radio for well over 50 years and is known to be the “most seasoned” operator of the group.

Over 30 hams provided assistance to the Red Cross and Salvation Army in Greensburg, which had a need for communication that lasted weeks.

Currently, there are more than 2.5 million amateur radio operators around the world and 660,000 in the U.S., said Bruce Frahm of Colby and a member of the Trojan Amateur Radio Club.

Tyson and Jennifer Reed are new hams this year, Frahm said, along with rather recent hams Colby Fire Chief Bob McLemore, Floyd Moore and Ryan Sturdy.

See “HAMS,” Page 9