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Fun, then fireworks



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Natasha Besser, center, watched her plinko playing piece drop to the bottom of the board during the High Plains Lions Club July Fourth festivities at the Thomas County Fairground. The evening was capped off by the Kiwanis Club fireworks show.



Colby Free Press publisher John Van Nostrand, left, gave Melinda Morton her \$231 in one dollar coins Wednesday. She won "Cointest" sponsored by the Free Press and various businesses.



LEFT: The Red Barn Gang provided entertainment during July 4 activities at the Thomas County 4-H Building Wednesday. RIGHT: The Kiwanis Club fireworks display capped off Independence Day festivities Wednesday.



Area wheat harvest still shows better than expected yields

Michelle Myers
Free Press Intern

It's safe to say farmers are happy with the way the wheat is looking, and they have reason to be.

"It's been better than expected in a lot of areas. I think Thomas County will be the premier county," said Steve Ziegelmeier with ZEZ Commodities.

Favorable weather for harvest is seen across the northern Plains, indicating

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Steve Ziegelmeier, ZEZ Commodities

high test weights with bushels ranging from 40-70 per acre.

An average of \$5.98 per bushel is contributing to the successful wheat harvest.

"Most of them are very happy with it," said Brian Olson, agronomist for the Thomas County Extension Office. "They haven't had too many problems. There's

always moisture in the air in the morning, so most don't get started until later, but the hot weather makes it good for cutting."

Grain elevators are also experiencing the effects of the large amounts of wheat that are coming in.

"We started taking wheat on June 21, and we're still taking it today.

Frontier Ag won't turn anybody away, but Winona, Brewster and Bird City have had to pile it on the ground," said J.J.

Denny, branch manager for Frontier Ag in Mingo.

"Overall, guys have been fairly pleased with it.

"There are some fields here and there that aren't as good as some farmers would have hoped, but it's been generally good across the county," said Olson.

"We're on the tail end of cutting, another three or four days.

"There are chances of rain on Monday, but they'll be wrapped up by then."

Prairie dog invasion concerns county

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Beulah Cemetery has some unwanted visitors. A few have even trying to move in.

Paul Baird, cemetery caretaker, told the Thomas County Commissioners Monday he has seen prairie dogs in and around the cemetery. He thinks they are coming from a nearby pasture, and wanted to know what can be done about the rodents. An established colony would be a problem.

Recently, one animal had burrowed under a headstone. The prairie dogs could cause damage to the grounds by such activity, as well as being a nuisance if a colony was formed. Baird will talk with noxious weed supervisor Clair Schrock about finding the source of the prairie dogs.

In other business, the commissioners went into executive session for 15 minutes to discuss personnel issues. After the session, they approved raising the salary of Lisa Molstad, Thomas County Health Department administrator.

Her salary was raised three percent, or \$1,140 to \$39,140. The raise was effective July 1.

Chairman Ken Christiansen said Molstad had a six-month probationary period, and her salary did not reflect the 3 percent raise given to county employees at the beginning of the year.

Molstad also talked about a state grant received by the health department. The grant was \$39,886. Molstad said she requested \$53,835.

She said \$5,000 will be used for dental screenings at local schools. The county received \$11,249 for family planning.

Molstad said in addition to Thomas County, the department also provides family planning services to Rawlins and Logan counties. Those services consist of birth control, lab and provider fees.

"We can't run a program without those three things," she said.

The grant will be used to pay for pharmaceuticals for the program. The commissioners will offset the rest, providing tax money for lab fees and provider fees.

Thomas County undersheriff leaving office

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Thomas County Undersheriff Jason Moses has accepted a position with the Adjutant General's office and will begin his new job on July 16.

"I will be going to work for the state of Kansas as their Interoperable Communications Coordinator," Moses said.

"My primary responsibility will be to coordinate an effort to achieve effective communications throughout all public safety responders in

the state."

Moses said, in the wake of national and international events over the past several years, Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, Kansas Emergency Management Director and Kansas Adjutant General, created the new position Moses will fill.



Moses

"There has been a change in how emergency responders have viewed their response strategies," Moses said. "As the greater possibility of a response to a large-scale disaster presents itself, public safety responders have shifted their view to a broader scope."

Moses said public safety responders are looking beyond themselves, and are now planning how they will operate with responders throughout our country.

"This shift in strategy has brought with it a number of issues. One of the greatest issues is the ability for

public safety responders from any of our cities, counties, states, and the nation as a whole to communicate with each other," he said.

Moses said historically, communications systems for public safety agencies have not looked beyond response within their jurisdictions and the immediate area. He also said many responders cannot communicate with other agencies within their own jurisdiction.

"With information gleaned from the coordinated effort, I must write

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Cleanup begins as water starts receding

OSAWATOMIE (AP) — As some of the luckier residents of this southeast Kansas town enjoy the Fourth of July, others will have less to celebrate as they return to homes damaged by floodwater.

And for others, like Jesse Kingsolver, the holiday will be another day of waiting for the waters to recede enough to get back into a duplex he shared with his wife and two children. Shortly after the waters inundated Osawatomie on Sunday, the duplex was under 5 feet of water, and the family was able to salvage only some clothes and two vehicles.

Kingsolver said the water had re-

ceded but he expected it to be three or four days before he could get into the duplex again.

Like many others, Kingsolver has no flood insurance because his duplex was in a flood plain.

"We signed up for some aid from FEMA, but they're not here yet," he said Tuesday.

Kingsolver's duplex was one of 210 dwellings — including single-family homes, duplexes, mobile homes and apartments — that were under water Tuesday. But heat and 20 pumps from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were making progress against the water.

Law enforcement officers and

National Guard troops were watching the flooded areas, and residents were being discouraged from returning to their homes until city and county inspectors were able to check them.

The residences must be dry before electricity and gas can be restored, said Mark Schmidt, Miami County undersheriff.

"Once the water recedes, they can get in there and inspect the dwellings pretty quickly," Schmidt said.

Of the nearly 300 staying in Red Cross shelters statewide, 120 were at the Trojan Elementary School in Osawatomie, said Sharon Watson, spokeswoman for the Kansas adju-

tant general.

The Salvation Army was serving meals and distributing donations that had poured in for residents since Sunday. So many clothes had been donated that people were being discouraged from bringing more, but donations of tools — such as shovels, hoses, gloves, boots and drills — would be appreciated, said Rob Roberts, director of the Miami County Salvation Army.

State officials said many other people, like the Kingsolvers, were staying with relatives. The flooding has forced at least 1,000 people from their homes throughout southeast Kansas, Watson said.