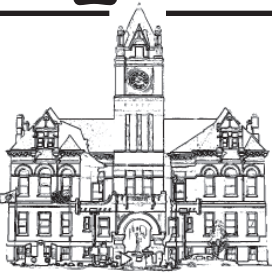


Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Take note and cover

By John Van Nostrand
Is God keeping his protective hand over Thomas County or is it just not our turn - yet?
Wednesday's killer tornado in Chapman and western Iowa are yet more files in this year's lengthy list of severe, threatening and deadly weather.
We are nearly halfway through 2008, and this year has already had about more than double the number of confirmed tornadoes across the country than the previous record year. Remember, the last tornado in Colby happened in the month of August (2006). There is still lots of time left. Unfortunately, deaths are also adding up.
Western Kansas and tornadoes go hand-in-hand. Quinter had a tornado to close for comfort before Memorial Day. Bird City had a nearby tornado and damage in March 2007. Greensburg, in south central Kansas and its massive, destructive tornado from May 2007 is still haunting.
Weather is just one of those things we think we are preparing for, but some subconsciously think nothing bad will happen. We tune into our favorite radio or TV station to keep track of the storms to know when to run for cover. And sometimes when people run for cover you might not have a choice of where to go. One Boy Scout told a newspaper a group of Scouts stayed inside a bunkhouse for cover. But when the tornado got close enough, it picked up a nearby pickup and slammed it into the bunkhouse's stone chimney. The chimney fell part and falling debris hurt some of the people inside.
With the dozens of Scouts at the camp, some parents drove up and down Interstate 29 stopping at each town's hospital to see if their child was sent there. It took some parents at least six hours after the storm to contact their child.
Everybody who has been in a tornado usually has a story to tell about it. Fortunately, there are some area people who want people to be even more proactive. Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan and Brewster City Superintendent Mike Schultz are having lectures about what to do after a tornado. The lecture is called "Lessons Learned from Greensburg."
The seminars are scheduled June 24. The first one will be 9-11 a.m. at the Brewster school, 127 Kansas Ave. The second session is 1-3 p.m. at the Sheridan County Emergency Service Building at 1717 Oak Ave. in Hoxie. Hopefully, there will be standing room only.
People can't think it won't happen to them.
— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Where to write, call

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
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Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the Free Press.



The darkest day



Joe Falkoff

• A Sideline View

Not even for a few hours, during one of the great games in NBA Finals history Thursday, could the NBA escape the dark cloud hanging over its head thanks to renegade official Tim Donaghy.
With the Celtics in the midst of their epic comeback, statements of denial from the Kings owners and commissioner David Stern flashed across the bottom of the screen in regards to the league fixing game six of the Western Conference Finals between Sacramento and Los Angeles in 2002.
Some people may not have noticed it because they were so tuned to the action. For the ones that did, it's sad to see the league have to go through this especially right in the middle of a Celtic/Laker NBA Finals series.
Stern said a year ago when Donaghy was found to have bet on games he officiated this was the darkest day in his tenure. He hasn't seen anything yet.
The idea of the NBA fixing a Western Conference Finals game to increase ratings and help get the Lakers in the Finals is on par with the infamous Black Sox scandal of 1919, which was later made into a movie, Eight Men Out. This is worse than steroids, worse than Spygate, worse than dogfighting and worse than Pete Rose betting on baseball as a manager even. In fact, I really can't think of a more severe allegation other than a whole NBA Finals series being fixed.
Before I give the NBA their death sentence everyone is predicting, I want to hold off judgment until all of the facts come out. You can bet as soon as this series is over, the fixing scandal will be the talk of the sports landscape throughout the summer.
As of right now, the NBA looks so obviously guilty of fixing that game it's almost embarrassing. The Lakers shot 27 free throws in the fourth quarter compared to nine for Sacramen-

But when I say it would be the darkest day in league history, that doesn't mean I think the league won't survive this.
In fact, I think the impact from a business perspective will be minimal.
It's not like the games will no longer be televised or Lebron James or Kobe Bryant are suddenly going to quit. The game will still be the game we love no matter how many shady people are involved at the upper levels.
There have been college basketball games fixed by players before, and I don't think the NCAA is hurting too much in popularity right now, nor has it ever. Also, while this is a more serious allegation than Spygate, it's similar in that both incidents happened several years ago.
It's over and done with and there's nothing we can do about it now. I suppose the Lakers could be forced to forfeit their NBA championship, but that doesn't make the Kings or the New Jersey Nets any happier. They still don't have a ring.
Being a fan myself, I know how forgiving we can be. With this incident having occurred six years ago, it's hard to get too terribly upset about it. It's kind of like finding out your girlfriend cheated on you six years after the fact. It's like 'well, that's messed up,' but you don't have nearly the same rage as if you found out a week after it happened.
I'm not saying there won't be a little drop off in attendance. There will be some, especially in markets that don't support their team already.
But if you love basketball, you're going to love it at all costs.
It doesn't matter how many times you get punched in the gut.
Although this one hurts worse than most.
—Joe Falkoff is a reporter for the Colby Free Press.

Kansans frustrated with energy prices

By Rep. Jerry Moran
Kansans have repeatedly expressed their frustrations and concerns about how high energy costs are harming their family budgets and communities. It is past time for Congress and the president to act. We need to work to increase the supply of energy and decrease the demand. We must be aware and work to conserve energy where we can. Research dollars should be directed into exploring additional alternative energy sources, new forms of bio-energy and more fuel efficient automobiles. We must also tap into the oil and natural gas resources within our own borders.
National Champion Kansas Jayhawks
On Tuesday, I attended a ceremony in the Rose Garden at the White House where President Bush honored the Kansas Jayhawk basketball team for winning the 2008 NCAA championship. After the White House ceremony, the Kansas congressional delegation had the opportunity to honor the team at a ceremony near the Capitol. I enjoyed visiting with coach Bill Self and many of the players and congratulating them on their successful season.
Veterans Advisory Panel on Rural Health
In February, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it was creating a national advisory panel on rural health to advise the top leaders of the VA about health care issues affecting veterans in rural areas. My nomination of Dr. Bob Moser of Tribune was accepted this week by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. Dr. Moser will serve on the 13-member panel that will provide guidance to Secretary Peake and Under Secretary for Health Dr. Michael J. Kussman.
Dr. Moser is well qualified to serve on the advisory panel. He grew up in Tribune and returned there after completing medical school at the University of Kansas. He serves as the Medical Chief of Staff and practices at Greeley County Hospital. Dr. Moser was named the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians Family Physician of the Year in 2006. As a medical doctor working to provide the best care for his veteran patients living in a highly rural area of Kansas and Colorado, Dr. Moser's perspective has been invaluable to me and will likewise prove beneficial to the VA.
House Hunger Caucus
This week, I co-chaired a House Hunger Caucus briefing addressing the rising cost of food. This briefing focused on testimony from expert witnesses in the field of agricultural development. Scientists and representatives from organizations working with farmers testified about ways Congress can encourage higher yields. Fertilizer, quality seeds and improving

growing techniques can help improve production, but many countries lack the infrastructure for farmers to market their produce. I was glad to see the Caucus begin this discussion. It is vital to increase the amount of food farmers in Kansas and around the world produce if we are to accomplish the goal agreed to last week at the United Nations World Food Summit – halving the number of undernourished by 2015.
In the Office
Sandy Barnett of Topeka, Sharon Katz of Overland Park, Kay Anderson of Leavenworth, Sarah Terwel of Lawrence and Charlotte Linsner and Chelsey DiPlacito of Hays were in with the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence to advocate for full funding of the Violence Against Women's Act and the Victims of Crime Act. They also highlighted the importance of rural outreach efforts and the continued need to raise awareness about these issues.
Brad and Sherri Luthe, Connie Fahrbach and Rose Mary Mohr of Wichita; Gary Parker of Colby; and Karen Cook of Lawrence were in representing Mental Health America to talk about the importance of mental health insurance parity and the need for community support services.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

