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Truck convoy coming to town

By Patty Decker

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Truck drivers and their big rigs are needed in the Colby area at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 20, to have some fun and help raise money for more than 5,000 Special Olympics athletes across Kansas.

The 2008 World's Largest Truck Convoy will benefit Kansas Special Olympics athletes by raising money for training, medals, meals, competition and equipment, said Jane Mentlick, one of the organizers here.

"We are not only volunteers," she said, "but we are also a Special Olympics family. We started the local Colby program for our son, Greg, more than 10 years ago."

In addition to helping their son, Mentlick said, she and her husband Joe wanted to help other athletes statewide.

For the World's Largest Truck Convoy, truckers enter their 18-wheel rigs for a \$100 fee, which includes a slot in the convoy, a goodie bag, lunch and entertainment, Mentlick said.

"To participate," she said, "the truck must be of 10 tons gross vehicle weight or larger and drivers must sign a waiver of liability and show a valid drivers license and proof of insurance."

The event will begin at Mitten's Travel Center off the east exit from Interstate 70 in Oakley and end at Truck Town, 105 Horton Ave., in Colby, between the two Colby exits.

"The convoy will roll down the highway at 11 a.m.," she said, "and everyone is invited to watch along the way."

The truckers will be attempting to maintain the event's Guinness Book of World Record status, as Colby area participants join with truckers throughout the nation in one big convoy.

"This year, more than 2,000 truckers are expected to take part," she said.

"In Colby, we are hoping to get 100 or more registered."

The convoy was introduced in 2001 and since then, more than 8,000 trucks, from including big rigs and dump trucks, have traversed more than 2,000 miles, she said.

Thirty-four states are taking part in the convoy this year, plus five Canadian provinces.

Last year, she said, the event raised more than \$700,000 for Special Olympics athletes.

"Please join America's compassionate army of truck drivers as the state's law enforcement community escorts the World's largest Truck Convoy across Kansas," Jane said Thursday.

Everybody loves a parade!



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Amy Jennings (in middle, above), director of Puddle Duck Preschool, brought many of her students to watch Colby High School's homecoming parade Friday and grab for candy. Junior Dalton Garcia (below left) sat next to a wagon wheel on his class float during the parade. The juniors' float theme was "Hit the

Trail, Cowboys," referring to the Eagles' opponent, Goodland High. The senior-class float (below right) carried the homecoming theme of "How the West Won." School spirit and homecoming festivities paid off, as the team defeated the Cowboys, 20-6, on Friday night. Look for more highlights this week.



Goodland residents react to high electric bills

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
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Goodland city commissioners held a special session last week to review higher-than-expected power charges that send people's utility bills through the roof — and find a way to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Mayor Rick Billinger, who has been calling for a review of the electrical department's "operating cost adjustment," said he wanted to see the city look at how the cost adjustment is figured, and explain to citizens why the bills jumped this month.

Commissioner Annette Fairbanks agreed the city should have a consultant who helped with the rate review two years ago come back and see if an adjustment can be made to avoid such similar spikes.

Rod Blake, power plant superintendent, said the high bills came because the city received the highest power purchase bill from Sun-

"This was a huge ripoff. How do you expect most people to come up with this money?"

Iva Lee Stephens
Goodland resident

flower he has ever seen, yet the amount of power used customers was way down. That meant the bill for July use, when the mercury was in triple digits, had to be spread around some otherwise lower bills.

Billinger asked if power sales were down. Blake said electric sales were down 1.4 million kilowatts, 1 million of that in one month. Billinger said that should drop the bill from Sunflower.

"Yes," Blake said, "but that won't show up on the bills until next month. We should not have anything like this again."

"I know what the cost is for the 4 megawatts of firm power we purchase. After the firm, they are

just throwing darts at what they are doing at Sunflower. Every day, I look at the market rate, and I do not have a clue as to where Sunflower is getting the number from."

City Clerk Mary Volk said the city is having to pay the market price for anything it buys over the regular 4 megawatts.

The commissioners each had a copy of a letter from Iva Lee Stephens complaining about the utility bill.

"This was a huge ripoff," she wrote. "How do you expect most people to come up with this money? We very rarely use our air conditioner, and when we do we set it at 80 degrees. Put this letter

on the commissioners' desk."

Blake said the city is trying to address a billing issue that should help reduce the difference between what the bill is from Sunflower and what is billed to customers.

"Right now, there is a 10-day difference between when the meters are read and we get the bill from Sunflower," he said. "If that gap could be cut down to a couple of days, we would have a better balance to bill against what has been sold."

Volk said the city has ordered a meter-reading unit that will help reduce the gap, but it will be a few weeks before it is in operation.

Billinger asked what else happened to make the August bills so high.

Blake said there was time when the transformer tie with Sunflower was down and the city had to run its power plant, which costs more than buying from Sunflower.

Volk said the new meter-reading unit will allow the city to read all radio-equipped meters in about a day, and that will cut the gap down

to one to two days. She said the cost of the unit is about \$10,000.

Commissioner Josh Dechant asked how long it will take to get the new unit. Volk said it was ordered last week. She said a man who will help with the software will be in Goodland next week, but it will take four to six weeks to get it all working.

Blake said the new meter reading unit will not eliminate the operating cost adjustment, but it will help it be more current. Billinger said the way he understood it, the September bill that people get in October will reflect the lower rate and the city may not have an operating cost adjustment.

"I think we need to have some sort of cap on the operating cost adjustment," Billinger said.

"If you get the rest of the world to cap their charges, we can do that," Blake said.

Blake said under the current operating cost adjustment program anything that costs over \$40,000 would come out of the reserve and be amortized.

Briefly

Class of '82 remembers

The Forever '82 Fund, a new service of the Thomas County Community Foundation, will be used for community betterment in the name of members of the Colby High Class of 1982.

The class hopes to accumulate enough money to have a permanent fund so it will have an impact each year forever.

Fallen classmates so far include Brenda Drulinger, Joyce Hatfield, Kelly Ellis, David Tangeman, Marty Crampton and Linda (Stoecklein) Holzhueter. Send tax-deductible gifts to the foundation at 350 S. Range Ave., Suite 14, Colby, Kan. 67701, noting in the memo section that the check is for the Forever '82 Fund. For information, call 460-9152 or e-mail tccf@st-tel.net.

Program to help parents

Smart Start Northwest Kansas will offer a program called "Nurturing Families" for parents and children beginning next Tuesday, Sept. 23. The program emphasizes the importance of people learning new parenting skills and all family members learning new and healthier ways to live together, the agency says. The free eight-week program will include a meal, a training session and family interaction time. Contact Smart Start at 465-9103 for information or to register.

Dogs ready for adoption

Colby Animal Clinic has a year-old Welsh corgi, a schnauzer/terrier mix and other dogs looking for new homes. The clinic also has a lot of strays waiting for owners to find them and take them home. If the strays remain unclaimed, they will be up for adoption next week, a clinic spokesman said. To identify or adopt a pet, call 460-8621 or visit the clinic, 810 E. Fourth St.

Bluegrass event Thursday

Tickets are available for a concert featuring the Isaacs and Chace McNinch, bluegrass singers, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the Colby High auditorium. For questions, prices or ticket locations, call (785) 443-1994.

Book review Tuesday

A book, "Last Rights" by Stephen P. Kiernan, will be reviewed at 7 p.m. Tuesday, at the Hospice Services Office, 515 W. Fourth St., by Barbara (Scheopner) Stoecklein. "'Last Rights' offers a hopeful, profound vision for patients, doctors and families: a way to honor the dying during their time of greatest

vulnerability, a chance for families to reconnect and opportunity for the medical system to treat patients with ultimate respect, a time to give comfort and compassion to those we love," Stoecklein says.

1958 Class plans reunion

The Colby High School Class of 1958 will hold its 50th reunion Thursday through Sunday, Oct. 2-5, in Branson, Mo., said Sandy Harper, one of the organizers. "If you were in the class, we would like to hear from you," she said. For questions, call her at 462-3759 or Norma Higerd, 462-7806.

Memory Walk Saturday

The annual Alzheimer's Memory Walk and balloon release will be Saturday at Fike Park. Anyone interested in walking should register at 10 a.m. Call Jody Metcalf, 462-3275, or Jada Tubbs, 460-9084.

