



12 pages

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## Harvest delayed by moisture levels

By Vera Sloan

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What is normally a fall harvest is turning into an early winter harvest for farmers trying to bring in tons of corn and milo in northwest Kansas, with maybe a third of the crop still to go.

The National Weather Service predicted slightly warmer temperatures for the week, but says the weather will turn cold tonight, with lows near 10 and a wind chill around zero for three nights. There's no mention of moisture except slight flurries today and tonight.

But colder, drier weather is exactly what the farmers are looking for to make it easier to get their equipment into the fields.

Custom harvester Jim Deibert said Monday that crops are coming along a little slow because the moisture in the grain has no reason to go down. The weather is not drying, and the fields are still mostly mud, he said, so the grain is holding the moisture.

"However, there's a cure coming," he said, "because when the cold gets here, that's gonna' help a lot.

"Right now, we're going out around 5 to 6 a.m. and cutting until the frost goes out of the ground, and that's why we see so many trucks on the road early in the morning. Yesterday, Tom Redmond and I stood

### Farmers looking forward to cold week

Late-planted wheat could be hurt by a cold wave expected to send lows into the teens this week, but in most area fields, the crop has plenty of moisture and should adjust to the cold.

It's hard to believe, but only 10 days ago, on Nov. 22, the Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service reported 9 percent of northwest Kansas with a 4 percent shortfall of topsoil moisture and a 9 percent shortage of subsoil moisture.

In the same area, 13 percent reported a surplus in topsoil moisture and 11 percent surplus in subsoil moisture.

The service reported that across the state, 73 percent of the corn had been harvested, 52 percent of the milo and 94 percent of the soybeans.

See "COLD," Page 3

out in a field, and watched our feet slowly sink into the ground because it is so soft. In 1973, we were still cutting milo in conditions like this, but I haven't

See "HARVEST," Page 3

## Santa coming to town Sunday for 12th annual Light Parade

The 12th Annual Colby Christmas Light Parade, with the theme this year of "The Spirit of Christmas on the Prairie," will begin downtown at 5:45 p.m. Sunday.

The parade will start at Second Street and Franklin Avenue and go north down the main street through Fike Park to Santa City.

Santa Claus will be leading the parade, which this year will be part of the year-long celebration of Thomas County's 125th anniversary.

"We look forward to the parade

every year, and it would be great to have more entries than we have ever had in celebration of Thomas County," said Holly Whitaker, executive director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.

Entries are still being taken for any group, organization or individual who wants to be in the parade, Whitaker said. Registration forms are available at the Chamber office, 350 S. Range Ave., Suite 10. Parade check-in will begin at 5 p.m. at Tina Harris Physi-

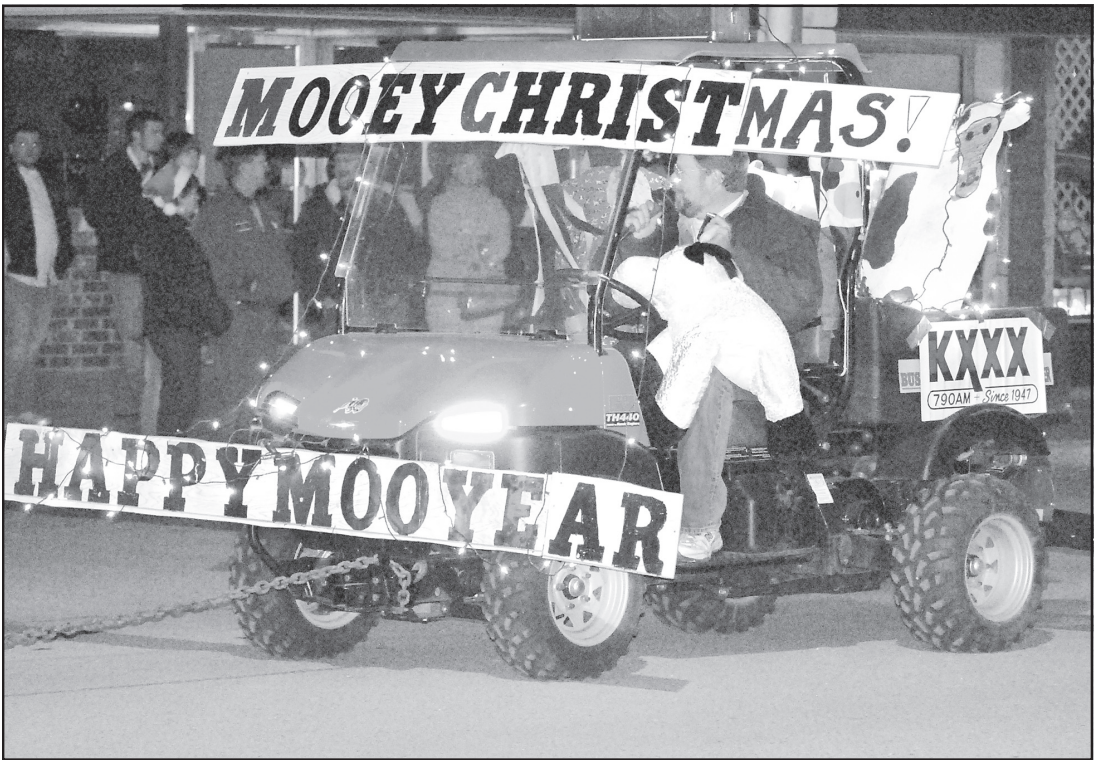
cal Therapy.

There will be prizes for the best floats in categories including organizations, businesses, lighted vehicles, religious organizations and youth.

"First and second place will be chosen from each category," Whitaker said. "First prize will receive a \$50 Chamber gift certificate and second place a \$25 gift certificate."

To pick up a registration form, stop by the Chamber office or call at (785) 460-3401.

### Christmas in ag country



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Paul Heskett drove KXXX Radio's cow-themed float in the Oakley Holiday Light Parade on Friday. A good crowd braved declining temperatures to see over 30 lit-up floats and vehicles, including ones by Oakley Implement and Eberle Construction as well as the Oakley fire, ambulance and police departments.



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

The gun is fake, the friendship is real. With his trusted friend Willie, a yellow lab, after a family hunt, Braden Schiffner couldn't be more proud if he'd have bagged a pheasant himself. He celebrated his seventh birthday on Friday with his dad, Brooke Schiffner, grandpa Glenn Schiffner, and Willie, who stirred up the pheasants.

## Young hunter finds age-old friendship

By Vera Sloan

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Braden Schiffner turned seven years old the day after Thanksgiving. For his birthday, he got to go hunting with his dad, Brooke, a structural architect in Denver, his grandpa, District Judge Glenn Schiffner of Colby, and his best friend, Willie.

Willie is a yellow Labrador retriever. He's 10 and he likes to hunt, even more than Braden's dad and grandpa.

Braden's gun isn't real, but when you're seven, and in the field with pheasants popping up all around you, it doesn't matter because a seven-year-old's imagination is always better than the real thing anyway.

Willie probably enjoyed the day more than anyone, but it took its toll because he had just finished a 10-week round of chemotherapy treatment for cancer, and was a tired dog when they returned from the field.

Early this past summer, Brooke said, the family

noticed a growth on Willie's back leg. He said the Lab wasn't eating as well as usual, but he didn't appear to be sick.

After a trip to the vet, and some testing, the doctor confirmed that the growth on Willie's leg was cancer. To make it even worse, it was stage 3, meaning it was advanced.

Willie had been a member of the Schiffner family since he was eight weeks old, said Brooke's wife Kirsten. He was there when baby Braden came home from the hospital, and then five years later when baby sister Annika joined the family.

There was the time when the family (along with Grandpa Glenn and Grandma Diana) were locked out of their house in Denver. Glenn said Brooke was even able to coax Willie to stand up and press down on the door lock, and always obedient to his master, he actually got the door unlocked from the inside!

The family agreed, that without a doubt, Willie was a keeper.

See "HUNTER," Page 3

## Troops react to new Afghanistan plan

FORWARD OPERATING BASE AIRBORNE, Afghanistan (AP) — U.S. service members in Afghanistan said Wednesday that President Barack Obama's decision to send 30,000 more troops offered hope that they can go home — if the reinforcements can build up the Afghan army to protect civilians against the Taliban.

The troops at this base in Wardak province, west of Kabul, learned of Obama's decision while watching TV clips of his speech during their breakfast of sausage, eggs, hash browns, fruit and cereal. Obama said that if conditions permit, the troops could begin coming home

in 18 months.

"Really, I'm truly happy," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Phillip M. Hauser, an explosives demolition expert from Salina, Kan., who is on his fourth tour of Afghanistan and Iraq. "As soon as the Afghans can do it on their own without our help, we can go home."

Hauser said the Afghans were inexperienced — but he didn't question their determination.

"They charge in and start pulling the wires" on the explosives, Hauser said. "It's not the safest way to do things, but these guys have the guts."

Sgt. Maj. Andrew Spano of

Northboro, Mass., deployed with the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, wondered whether to bank on the beginnings of a U.S. pull-out in 18 months.

"Obama talking to the American people and the world shows that we have much greater direction," he said. "The train has been going down the track for some time, but this just gives us more guidelines."

But Spano appeared skeptical whether Afghan forces would be ready in 18 months — a fear

See "PLAN," Page 3

## Briefly

### Food bank needs donations

Genesis-Thomas County food bank needs nonperishable items for its Christmas Food Basket project. Drop them off at the office, 350 S. Range, Suite 13, between 10 a.m. and noon and 1 and 4 p.m. Wednesdays, or at Leroy's Printing, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, First Presbyterian Church, Colby United Methodist Church or Trinity Lutheran Church. For information, call the office at 460-7930.

### College band concert Thursday

The Colby Community College instrumental music department's annual winter concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center on campus. The performance will include the Jazz and Concert bands, directed by Tony Schroer. Everyone is invited to this free performance. For information, call college spokesperson Debbie Schwanke at 460-5411.

### Women's group plans fund raiser

The Colby Women's League will hold its 13th annual Christmas brunch from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday at Meadow Lake Golf Course and Restaurant. Donations will be accepted to benefit area groups and charities. For information, call Anita Hills at 462-6208.

### School plans annual banquet

Heartland Christian School invites everyone to its annual Partners for the Future Endowment Banquet, "Continuing the Vision," at 6 p.m. Friday at the school. Tickets are \$15 and may be purchased from the school office at 460-6419 by Tuesday.

### Singles and couple dance Friday

There will be a singles and couples dance from 7:30 to 11 p.m. Friday at Casa De Burritos, 310 N. Franklin. Craig Stevens will be the musical guest.

For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 855-2341.

### Pancake breakfast Saturday

The High Plains Lions Club will hold its annual Pancake Feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Colby Community Building. Proceeds will go to the club's community improvement program. Bring your old eye glasses and hearing aids so they can be recycled, said club president Roger Hale. For information, call Hale at 462-1172.

### Church offers nativity display

The Colby Presbyterian Church will hold its annual Nativity-Tea from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at 515 W. Fourth St. On display will be hundreds of nativity scenes from around the world that church and community members have, including those of Joan Todd of Rexford. There is no charge; light refreshments will be served. For information, call the

church office at 462-6342.

### Sorority plans cookie, candy sale

Kappa Upsilon, a community service sorority, will hold a Christmas cookie and candy sale from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the United Methodist Church. All proceeds will be donated in town. For information, call Linda Van Horn at 460-2284.

### Legion seeks care package items

The Colby American Legion Auxiliary is accepting donations for care packages to deployed soldiers until Sunday, when the packages will be put together. For information, or to donate, call Megan Quenzer at 443-3611 or Abby Barnett at 694-1626.

