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VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press



## Big catch at fish derby

Gabriel Schriener, 12, of Colby, got assistance from a friend, Caleb Morris, 11, to check the weight of a four-pound catfish he reeled in at the second annual fishing derby Saturday at Villa High Lake. The boys were just two out of many happy young fishermen and women smiling, because the fish were biting. Even the catfish seemed to have a smile for the camera. Twenty-five young fishermen went away with new poles given out by C&M Guns and Pawn and 10 tagged fish were worth \$50 each in gift certificates from Woofter Construction and Irrigation of Colby.

## Tornado touches fields near Brewster

By Kevin Bottrell  
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A series of severe thunderstorms that shook, rattled and rolled their way through Thomas County on Sunday night spawned a quick tornado south of Brewster, pelted Colby with heavy rain and hail and caused more trouble around the region.

Meteorologist Chris Foltz with the National Weather Service office in Goodland said a very brief tornado was sighted about 6 miles southeast of Brewster at 8 p.m. No damage had been reported.

Radar showed at least three dis-

tinct storms moving from north to south. The first briefly dropped heavy rain and small hail about 6:30 p.m. on its way north. The weather service warned of possible walnut-sized hail.

A second storm hit the western part of the county about 8 p.m., spawning the Brewster tornado. The third moved through the center of the county about 9:50 p.m., dropping nickel- and dime-sized hail. Areas of lighter rain and constant high winds accompanied each storm.

Foltz said two tornadoes were reported by spotters in Sherman County. One was first reported at 8:50 p.m. southeast of Ruleton

on I-70 west of Goodland. The service issued a tornado warning, urging people to find shelter. Tornadoes are difficult to see at night, the warning said, and listeners were urged to find shelter while it was still light outside.

Another twister was reported at 9:07 p.m. Foltz said the tornado, visible from the service's Goodland office, was a "stovepipe" tornado, the same width at the top and bottom.

Crews from the nomadic science project Vortex 2, which travels around the Midwest chasing storms, were out watching

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

The Colby Fire Department sent several trucks to check out a report of smoke at Quality Inn on Sunday night. The fire rigs had to squeeze in around storm-chasing vehicles from the Vortex 2 tornado research project.

## Light fixtures may have caused Tuesday motel fire

By Vera Sloan  
and Kevin Bottrell

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Fire investigators Friday tracked the origin of a fire at the Quality Inn last week to a bathroom ceiling in the northwest corner of the south half of the C building.

Fire Chief Bob McLemore said he; Kris Smyth, an investigator for the state fire marshal's office from Scott City; and an insurance investigator spent about three hours at the scene Friday. They determined that the likely cause of the fire Tuesday morning was electrical problems either in the wiring above

the bathroom in room 255, which is right next to the breezeway on the second floor, or a problem in a bathroom light fixture.

McLemore said there were any number of ways the fire could have started in the room, which suffered the heaviest damage during the blaze. There was an infrared heat lamp right next to a regular light fixture in the room, he said, and either could have caused the fire. McLemore said that older installations should have a clearance between the light and insulation in the attic, but there was no space in between in this case. There could also have been faulty wiring in the lights or in the ceiling, he said.

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## County Road and Bridge Department gets two new trucks

Thomas County commissioners accepted bids from Tubbs and Sons for vehicles for the road and bridge department at their meeting last Monday.

A 2010 F-150 Super Cab pickup for \$19,850 will replace a 2004 pickup with 132,000 miles on it. A new service truck, a 2011 F-450 with box and lift, will replace a 1994 truck that's about on it's "last legs," said road supervisor Clair Schrock. Bid price was \$35,284. They also had bids from Colby Dodge and Limon Ford.

• Colby Police Chief Randy Jones and

Debbie Zerr, city finance director, brought a new communications agreement between the city and county to the meeting. The city will furnish around-the-clock communications for the county's Emergency 911, ambulance, sheriff and road and bridge departments for 2011.

The agreement includes salaries, Social Security, retirement, workman's compensation coverage and state unemployment tax. The cost figures out to be \$13.62 an hour for 365 days, said Randy Jones, for a total of \$119,336.38 The commissioners

approved the contract.

• Extension representatives Bob Standage, Rick Brown, Amie Kendrick, Clint Milliman and Diann Gerstner presented their 2011 budget request to the county. The amount included a 3 percent salary increase, they said, as their department did not receive any increase the past year. The overall request is for \$137,000, up from \$125,000 for 2010. The commissioners said they would put it in their pile for consideration at budget time.

• A bid from P&M Consulting from

Kansas City for new heating, air conditioning equipment and installation for the courthouse was accepted in the amount of \$120,814, with the condition that the company find a partial grant for the project. It included changes in the heating and air conditioning at the office complex, with a 4 percent discount to be negotiated if both buildings were contracted for at the same time.

• Rhonda Fernandez of Professional Insurance Consultants from Dodge City met with the commissioners regarding an ex-

pected 34 percent increase in the county's Blue Cross Blue Shield costs for 2011.

"The best thing to do is to try to stay with a carrier for at least three years," she said, "but you need to at least look to see what's out there that will be the best deal for the employees and the taxpayer."

Fernandez said she will look at all the options, and report back to the commission before the commissioners start looking at budget next month.

• The next meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday.

## Briefly

### Moran's staff here Tuesday

Staffers from Congressman Jerry Moran's will hold open office hours from 9 to 10 a.m. Tuesday at the Thomas County Courthouse. Chelsey Gillogly, a district representative for Mr. Moran, will be in the commissioners' room to meet with area residents on their views on the federal government or any difficulties with Social Security, Medicare, Veterans Affairs or other programs. For information, call Gillogly or Rachel Robben at (785) 628-6401.

### Forensics team plans open house

The Colby High School forensics team will have an open house and performance night at the Pioneer Memorial Library beginning at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday. Team members will do selections from their season and answering questions about the program. Refreshments will be served. For information, call Nancy Rundel at 460-5300.

### Treasurer still closing at 3:30

The Thomas County treasurer's office is closing at 3:30 p.m. through Friday, while employees work on software conversion. Treasurer Donita Applebury said the office will return to the regular 4 p.m. closing time earlier if possible. For information, call the office at 460-4520.

### Remember book sale at Library

It's time again for Pioneer Memorial Library's Memorable Book Sale, Thursday to Saturday, starting at 9 a.m. and closing at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 4:45 p.m. Friday and 3:45 p.m. Saturday. For information, call the library at 460-4470.

### Flyers plan fun day, lunch at field

The Colby RC Flyers will hold their annual fun fly from dawn to dusk Saturday and Sunday, June 12 and 13, at the club's field seven miles north of Colby

on K-25. Flying events and prize drawings will be held each day. Lunch will be served. For information, call Dave Backus at 460-6941 or Nick Nichols at 460-6357.

### Class will prepare for college

The Colby Community College adult education department is offering a free college preparation class, "Math Review and Other Stuff Too," Tuesdays and Thursdays in June. In addition to math, the class will include basic technology skills, writing, test-taking strategies, study techniques and problem solving. Director Nance Munderloh said the class will help both graduating high school students and adults going back to school. For information, call Munderloh at 460-4663.

### Vacation Bible School starts soon

Trinity Lutheran Church's Vacation Bible School

will be from 9:15 a.m. to noon next week, Tuesday to Friday, June 1 to 4, at the church. The school is open to kids age 3 (potty trained) through fifth grade. Parents can register at any time or at the church the first day of the class. For information, call Trinity Lutheran at 462-3497.

### Head Start taking applications

Thomas County Head Start preschool is accepting applications for 3- and 4-year-old children. The program takes applications all year, but children must be 3 by Sept. 1 to start class in the fall. Tuition is free. To apply, call 460-6067.

