



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Wind whips fire through cornfield

By Kevin Bottrell

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Fed by wind and dry conditions, a fire swept through a cornfield on the east side of Colby on Tuesday, threatening several businesses.

The fire appears to have started in a ditch near the temporary Willow Drive detour. Strong winds from the south carried the fire through the unharvested cornfield north toward the Red River sunflower plant. The blaze sent a towering plume of smoke to the north.

The Colby Fire Department got the call shortly before noon. It had a quick response time, since the field was less than a mile away down Country Club Drive.

Work crews opened the repaved Willow Drive several days early so emergency vehicles could use the temporary road. The road had been scheduled to be open for traffic on Thursday. Colby police and sheriff's deputies provided traffic control.

Firefighters were able to divert the fire around the Red

See "FIRE," Page 3

Meth lab seized at I-70 rest area

Saturday afternoon the Thomas County Sheriff's Department found and disposed of a mobile meth lab at an I-70 rest area.

Shane Finley with the Kansas Bureau of Investigation said deputies responded to a report of a possible methamphetamine lab at the I-70 westbound rest area at 4 p.m. Saturday.

With the help of the KBI, which often handles drug investigations, the deputies de-

termined that the vehicle was, in fact, a meth lab. The bureau processed the lab, and both agencies are continuing to investigate.

The sheriff's office encourages the public to make these reports. Finley said people should not handle or touch suspicious items. Methamphetamine labs especially contain chemicals and other hazardous materials that shouldn't be touched.

Foundation holds annual meeting

By Christina Beringer

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Melany Wilks, director of the Pioneer Memorial Library, told a story Monday that paid tribute to the support the Thomas County Community Foundation has given the community over the past decade.

"The foundation has given funds to the library for programs that other foundations will not fund," Wilks said. "Things like our Library in Motion field trips for youth. Some kids who go on our educational trips haven't even been out of the county before and one kid even overcame a fear of heights and was able to climb a wall. He was so proud of himself, and that one obstacle literally changed his life.

"His mother came to me and was so thankful. He now has the confidence to do anything, all because he was able to climb a wall. That's how the foundation impacts this small community who is doing big things. We have a bright future because of those who have invested in TCCF."

Wilks, along with about 50 others gathered at the Colby United Methodist Church for the foundation's 10th annual meeting. She was joined on the podium by Jeff Morrison and co-founders Richard Dickman and Cindy Black.

Black was welcomed by ex-



CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press
Former foundation president Jada Tubbs (left) gave pointers to newly elected president Kristina Hills (right) as she prepares to conduct her first meeting following the 10th annual meeting on Monday.

ecutive director Melinda Olson to share her personal experiences with the audience.

"I admit, I do turn to her whenever I have questions about the history of the foundation, and even about current events," Olson said.

"Cindy has always been a tremendous help to us and I thank her for her everything she has done to help the foundation succeed."

Black gave testament to the founding efforts of Cathy Harrison, Richard Dickman, Leilani

Thomas and herself. The group representing Leadership Thomas County was initially approached by the Kansas Health Foundation about setting up a local founda-

See "MEETING," Page 2

Revenue department looking to change tax laws

By John Milburn

Associated Press

TOPEKA — Kansas' top revenue official said Monday that Gov. Sam Brownback will receive recommendations by the end of the year aimed at modifying the state's tax code and putting more money in state residents' pockets.

Revenue Secretary Nick Jordan told the Associated Press that a task force is nearing completion of the proposal that will take a broad approach at reducing taxes.

"We're looking at tax policy in a very comprehensive way. We're not just focusing on business or individual incomes," Jordan said. "I don't know that we are targeting numbers. We're targeting what is the best economic growth policy for the state."

Jordan, a former Republican state senator from Shawnee, declined to say specifically which taxes would be reduced. He said the

task force was working on a recommendation that Brownback "could feel comfortable with" advocating to the Republican-controlled Legislature.

Options include removing regulations that inhibit business growth, increasing disposable income for families and increasing the flow of capital into Kansas that will help businesses invest.

The secretary said the Kansas economy remains fragile despite six consecutive months of revenue growth. On Friday, the agency reported that September revenue collections beat expectations by \$27 million for the month.

Through the first quarter of the state's fiscal year the figure is more than \$66 million, putting Kansas on track to have an ending budget balance next summer of close to \$200 million, when factoring in cuts in state spending.

"We're looking long-term. We're looking about 10 years as to where we can go," Jordan said.

Jordan said the tax plan will come before the 2012 Legislature convenes in January. Legislators are meeting through the fall to discuss their own tax policy changes, including a bill that the House passed in 2011 that would have begun phasing out the state's income tax.

"We're not trying to affect anything that would affect local governments' revenue sources," Jordan said.

Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, a Topeka Democrat, said he hopes the changes in tax policy help restore the three-legged balance in Kansas between income, property and sales taxes.

"You don't ever want any of them to be too

See "REVENUE," Page 2

Trimming trees



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

A crew from G & S Tree Works has been busy this week trimming and cutting down several trees in Fike Park, including some that were damaged by the wind storm on Aug. 29.

