

Barbecue Wednesday celebrates volunteers

By **Marian Ballard**

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For 40 years or more, the Thomas County Fair Board has offered a free barbecue for everyone during the fair, and the tradition continues this year at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 1.

The event, started as a draw to get people to attend fair events, has become a way to say “thank you” to the many people who work to make the fair a success from beginning to end.

“I’ve been on the Fair Board for a long time,” said coordinator Darrel Dible, “and it’s a good way to give something back to the community.”

And the barbecue does give back – in a big way.

Starting about 3 in the afternoon on Tuesday, 850 to 875 pounds of beef – a full steer, boned and cubed – will be put in the cookers. With the heat turned down overnight, the meat simmers until it’s falling apart.

About 2 p.m. Wednesday, the crew goes into full gear, setting up to serve barbecue beef sandwiches, chips, watermelon and iced tea to about 2,200 people, topped off by ice cream courtesy of Midwest Energy.

All of this is put together by a crew of fair board members including Dible, board President Austen Moser, Brad Skolout, past board member Tom Chain, manager of Dillons, Ron Kogler and Nancy Rundel.

Dible said the full cost of the feast is between \$4,500 and \$5,000, but 65 to 75 percent of that is underwritten by sponsors. A major sponsor for several years has been the McCarty Family Farms, along with the City of Brewster, City of Rexford, Dillons, Foley Equipment, the Modern Woodmen and Road Runer Manufacturing.



The band Chye (pronounced “shy”) will be the main act for the Todd Becker Foundation concert Sunday, performing after a local group in the block of Franklin Avenue north of Fourth Street.

Concert carries message about choices

By **Sam Dieter**

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In 2005, Todd Becker was killed in a drunk-driving accident. This led his older brother, Keith Becker, to re-examine his life. From this, the Todd Becker Foundation was formed to help Keith speak about life decisions at high schools and community events.

This summer, Keith will be speaking at the Thomas County Free Fair on Sunday, July 29 at a rally and concert on Franklin Avenue between Fourth and Fifth streets.

“We’ll be blocking off a city street downtown,” said Andrew Johnson, high school coordinator for the foundation.

Jay Stewart, an assistant pastor at Wesleyan Church, said that the foundation got help to set up the event from local churches.

“The contacted the churches in Colby and organized this,” Stewart said. “They asked us to find local artists.”

Stewart, who plays banjo and guitar, brought together his father, Rob Stewart, Justin John, another pastor at Wesleyan, and Shannon Leebrick, a church attendee to play at the concert.

A free barbecue will start at 7 p.m., Johnson said. At 8 p.m., Stewart and his friends will perform briefly, followed by Chye, a Christian band which tours with the foundation. Keith Becke will speak after that, and the whole event should be done by about 10 p.m.

Keith’s talk, Johnson said is based around Matthew 7:13, a Gospel verse concerning the so-called straight and narrow road. He feels that it relates to choices that his younger brother made while in high school.

“He was on the narrow road and making good decisions, and by senior year in high school he was taking that wide road,” Johnson said of Todd. “So many of us are headed down that wide road to destruction.”

Johnson said that the foundation had an event several years ago at Colby High School, and this presentation is designed as a follow-up. Keith’s speech varies somewhat between audiences, but remains similar.

“It will be a different message than what he shares at the schools, but it will be a Christian message,” Johnson said. “With Keith’s message, he’s just hoping to impact the community to (get youths to) think about their lives and how they’re living.”

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