



10 pages

COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Wednesday

August 29, 2012

Volume 123, Number 135

Serving Thomas County since 1888

Hurricane spins into New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS (AP) – Hurricane Isaac began a slow, drenching slog inland from the Gulf of Mexico today, pushing water over a rural Louisiana levee and stranding some people in homes and cars as the storm spun into a newly fortified New Orleans exactly seven years after Katrina.

Although Isaac is much weaker than the 2005 hurricane that crippled the city,

the threat of dangerous storm surges and flooding from heavy rain was expected to last all day and into the night as the immense comma-shaped storm crawls across Louisiana.

Army Corps spokeswoman Rachel Rodi said the city's bigger, stronger levees were withstanding the assault.

There were initial problems with pumps not working at the 17th Street Canal, the

site of a breach on the day Katrina struck, but those have been fixed, Rodi said.

Rescuers in boats and trucks plucked a handful of people who became stranded from floodwaters in thinly populated areas of southeast Louisiana. Authorities feared many more could need help after a night of slashing rain and fierce winds that knocked out power to more than 500,000.

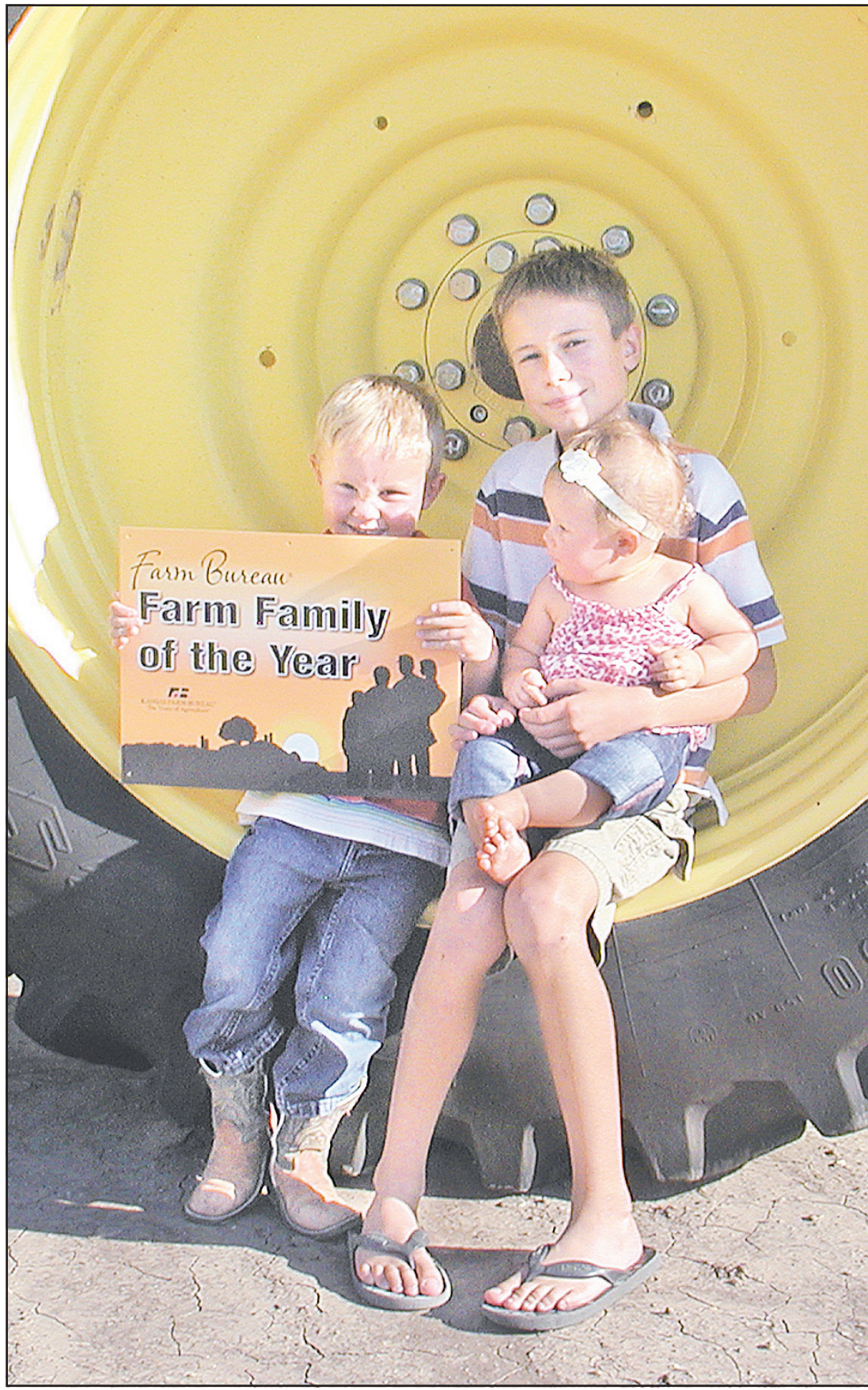
The extent of the damage was not entirely clear because officials did not want to send emergency crews into harm's way. In Plaquemines Parish, a fishing community south of New Orleans, about two dozen people who stayed behind despite evacuation orders needed to be rescued.

"I think a lot of people were caught with their pants down," said Jerry Larpen, sheriff in nearby Terrebonne Par-

ish. "This storm was never predicted right since it entered the Gulf. It was supposed to go to Florida, Panama City, Biloxi, New Orleans. We hope it loses its punch once it comes in all the way."

As Isaac's eye passed overhead, authorities in armored vehicles saved a family whose roof was ripped off, Larpen

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Brody Stramel sat with his brother Trey and sister Sophia in the wheel of their dad's tractor, holding a sign given to the family for being the Farm Family of the Year by the Thomas County Farm Bureau. The kids' dad, Bert, said that the family would compete against 10 others in northwest Kansas for the district award.



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Steve Wilson's family was honored as a Century Farm Family at the Thomas County Farm Bureau Association meeting on Aug. 14. His grandchildren, Paulena and Carrick Boshoff, stood up with him in the basement of the Community Building. Other family members were (from left) Jeremiah Wilson, Steve and Susie Wilson, Paul Boshoff with his daughter, Trinity, and Stephanie Boshoff.

Farm Bureau honors Stramels with award

By Sam Dieter

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Standing in a Morton building that serves as a garage and office, Bert Stramel pointed to a map of Thomas County, showing the land he owns.

"I'd say we're a little over 6,000 acres," he said. "From where we sit right now, about a mile in every direction is ours." Most of that land is around Bert's house just south of Colby, where he lives with his wife Lisa, sons Trey and Brody and daughter Sophia.

The farm helped the Stramels win the Farm Family of the Year award from the Thomas County Farm Bureau Association. They were honored during the annual meeting Aug. 14 in the basement of the Community Building.

The Farm Bureau board nomi-

nates a family for the award every year.

"It's just to recognize families that are very involved in farming and Farm Bureau," said Sue Draper, coordinator for the Farm Bureau.

Harvey Kistler won the environmental award for all the trees planted on his property.

Draper said that this award is given to farmers who make a positive environmental impact; the winner for the state competition in this area gets a large cash reward.

The families of Tom Rundel and Steve Wilson won the Century Farm Award, which is not as competitive and only requires a family to have owned at least 80 acres, a very small parcel, for 100 years to apply for it.

"It's just kind of a cool thing to say 'our family has maintained this piece of property for 100

years,'" she said.

As for the Stramels, Bert said they plan to take the next step in the farm family competition, filling out an application to win the award for the Farm Bureau 10th District, which covers 11 counties in northwest Kansas.

The winner of the competition will win a trip to see agriculture in another part of the country, such as California.

"They understand how we farm here, so they're going to see how they do it elsewhere," Draper said.

The nomination for the farm family of the year is based in part on a family's farm and in part on the strength of their participation community activities with the bureau, she said.

"My wife and I have been to Atlanta and San Antonio (for

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Three crashes occur in Thomas, Gove

Seat belts may have saved five people in two separate wrecks on Monday from serious injury. Another accident on Tuesday might have resulted in more serious injuries.

Two Colby women – both wearing seat belts – escaped with only minor injuries when their car rolled on the Brewster exit off of Interstate 70 about 10:05 a.m. Monday.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that the accident occurred about 18 miles west of Colby. Landa Witt, 58, Colby, was westbound on the exit when her 2006 Chevrolet Equinox went out of control on loose gravel. The car went into the ditch on the north side of the ramp, rolled one and a half

times and came to rest facing south on its passenger side.

Witt and a passenger, Phyllis Miller, 40, also of Colby, were taken to Citizens Medical Center, where they were treated before being released.

Another wreck about 10:33 a.m. the same morning sent an Oakley woman and a Canadian couple to the Oakley hospital. The patrol said the accident happened on U.S. 83 about five miles south of Oakley.

The report said Shirley Frey, 77, Oakley, was southbound in a 2006 Lincoln compact, when she tried to turn left. Her car and a northbound 2005 Ford pickup driven by Brendon Friesen, 22, of Ferintosh, Alberta, Canada, collided. Frey, Friesen and Carolee Friesen, 22, were all treated at the Logan County Hospital.

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CHRISTINA BERINGER
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John Schmidt looked at financial papers at Modern Woodmen Financial in Colby, where he is a financial representative.

Colby native helped by mentor

By Christina Beringer

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We've all heard the phrase, "It's the little things that matter most."

For one Colby native, that sums up his childhood. It's also the basis of a program he says helped him become the success that he is today.

"People don't think about how big of an impact the little things can have on a child's life," said John Schmidt, now a financial representative for Modern Woodmen Financial in Colby. "When I was a 'Little' in Big Brothers Big Sisters, my 'Big' gave me the opportunity to experience so many simple things – like putting tackle on a hook and changing the oil – that I wouldn't have gotten to do without him.

"And there were so many other things, too, that people take for granted. They were the things that you wouldn't think would matter, that really made the biggest difference in my life."

Schmidt and Big Brothers Big Sisters Director Orvella Romine say that it's easy to become a Big and it doesn't take as much time as people might think.

"Anybody who has time should at least look into it," said Schmidt. "They should contact Orvella, because whether it's direct or indirect, your involvement in a kid's life has some sort of positive influence, for you and the kid, now and in the future."

Schmidt said he and his younger brother Steve got involved in the program at age 9 when his parents

divorced and his mother, Judy, took a second job.

"My mom was working hard to provide for my brother and me and putting food on the table," said Schmidt. "She knew that we'd benefit from the program. It helped fill that masculine void in our lives."

"We got involved at the same time the program got started in Colby. Steve was the first match, and I was the second or third, but my match with Brian Gustin lasted the longest. We just hit it off and we had a really great relationship."

"Our match ended after three years when Brian moved to Wray, Colo., but we still keep in contact and are still close. He came to my graduations for high school, community college and even drove to Oklahoma when I graduated from Panhandle State University.

"We consider each other family, and I introduce him as my brother, even though he's 47 and probably old enough to be my dad."

Schmidt said that kids who come from a broken home, or kids who simply don't have the best home life, are used to disappointment.

"Promises mean so much more to them, so a Big has to be true to their word," he said. "The little promises that Brian kept and the guidance he gave me made the biggest difference. I attribute everything to him and my mom."

"Brian was faithful to his family and loyal to his wife. He treated people with respect. He taught me

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