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Commission Chairman Ken Christiansen (right) looked inside a storage compartment on the outside of Thomas County's newest ambulance while Thomas County Emergency Medical Services Director Joe Hickert gave him and others a tour of the vehicle. From left: Brewster Mayor Mike Baughn, Commissioner Paul Steele, Hickert and Christiansen.

## Department needs volunteers

By Christina Beringer  
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Emergency Medical Services Director Joe Hickert said Friday that they need more volunteers to serve Thomas County. He announced an Emergency Medical Technician semester-long training course, which will run from January to July, and he encourages any interested people to call (785) 460-4585 for details.

New volunteers may also get a chance to work in the newest ambulance purchased for the county, which will be housed in Colby. Commission Chairman Ken Christiansen, commissioner Paul Steele and Brewster Mayor Mike Baughn got a guided tour of the ambulance at the end-of-month meeting on Friday, and seemed eager to get inside to see what a newer medical services truck looks like.

Known as Thomas 6 to volunteers and department staff, it arrived in the county on Sept. 13.

"There's a certain amount of pride that goes along with that ambulance," Steele said with a smile after the tour.

Approval to purchase the \$83,355 2006 Traumahawk Type III remount from American Response Vehicles in Missouri was given to Hickert on Aug. 31, using money set aside for equipment. The remaining balance of the reserve account is about \$8,600.

The truck will be housed in Colby to serve patients and

make ground transportations to the local hospital and to other facilities when needed. It joins a fleet of four other ambulances plus a first-responder truck owned by the county.

Hickert said additional purchases still need to be made to fully equip the ambulance. However, he said the county doesn't have to buy any radios, because three have been donated. Thankfully, Hickert also said the truck has been wired with cables, too.

He was given approval to accept a bid from Prairie States Communications in Imperial, Neb., to program and install the radios and antennas and check the truck's wiring for \$943. It won over two other bids received from Mobile Radio in Great Bend for \$1,104 and from Nex-Tech in Hays for \$2,541.

Hickert also reported that he was able to trade three Lifepak 12 Biphasic defibrillators to Progressive Medical International for a trade credit of \$3,000. He had advertised the three units in hopes of selling them, with no luck.

An informal survey distributed within the state by Hickert was completed to find out how many ambulances have struck deer. He wanted to get a better idea of the potential risk to determine if the county's fleet should be equipped with deer guards.

"One person commented that they hit a deer without a deer guard," said Hickert. "It inca-



Emergency Medical Services Director Joe Hickert (left) gave a tour of a new ambulance to commissioners Friday and explained how some equipment is used to help patients. Commissioner Paul Steele tested out a built-in cushioned seat where emergency medical technicians sit to overlook patients when transporting them.

pacitated the ambulance while they had a cardiac patient on board."

Deciding they can't risk such a situation, commissioners agreed each of the five ambulances should have the protective guards. Hickert said he received one bid from Thunder-

struck in Salina, commenting it was much lower than what he'd expected. He said no other company has replied to his request for bids.

"Since we are purchasing five of them, the company said

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## Farmers expecting bad harvest

By Sam Dieter  
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Farmers are still adding up their corn yields amid a harvest that is predicted to be the worst in six years.

"When it was pollinating it was pretty hot and there was no moisture," said Thomas County Extension Agent Clint Milliman. "We knew it was going to be low."

As the corn crop comes in, the results are not looking good. Milliman said the yield for dryland corn in Thomas County is averaging 25 to 30 bushels an acre, although that yield varies widely.

"You go through the field and there's like nothing coming out of there, and then you go a little further into the field and it's like 50 (bushels)," he said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture released prediction num-

bers for different crops on Sept. 12; it predicted that Kansas cornfields will see their lowest crop since 2006. The predicted yield is 382.2 million, which is down 15 percent from 2011. The yield for all corn is predicted to be 91 bushels per acre, down 16 bushels from last year and the lowest since 1975. The next forecast will be released on Thursday, Oct. 11.

In Thomas County, Milliman said, 100 bushels per acre is the average yield for dryland corn most years. The crop should be all harvested by the end of this week. He said he does not have any numbers yet for the irrigated corn, which might not be all harvested until the end of the month.

"It might be a little less for irrigated, but it won't be as bad as we thought it would be," Milliman said.

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## Accident injures driver, kills cattle

By Sam Dieter  
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A cattle truck rolled in Gove County a week ago, killing several of the animals it was carrying and sending its driver to the hospital.

The semi-rig, driven by Jared Garst, 26, Salina, rolled into the center median of Interstate 70 at 2:25 a.m. last Wednesday, about a mile east of Oakley.

The 2008 Peterbilt tractor and the 1997 Wilson cattle trailer with 61 head of cattle inside, both came to rest on their sides.

Tod Hileman, public resource officer for the Highway Patrol, said that five of the animals died. The rest were taken from the scene to Oakley sale barn.

Garst was taken to Logan County Hospital in Oakley, where he was treated and released.

## KU looking to fill 64 faculty spots

LAWRENCE (AP) – The University of Kansas plans to hire 64 new faculty members to support an expansion of its engineering school and improve the university's capacity for research, school officials said.

Budget reductions have forced faculty cutbacks in recent years but the new hires should return

the faculty to its size in the 1990s, said Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little who took office in 2009.

Of the new hires, 30 will be employed in the School of Engineering – positions funded by growth in tuition fees from an expected 60 percent hike in enrollment at the school, the *Lawrence Journal-World* reported (bit.ly/QHCmEr).

## Vatican police testify in trial

By Nicole Winfield  
The Associated Press

VATICAN CITY – Vatican police said today they found thousands of documents hidden inside the home of Pope Benedict XVI's former butler, including original documents signed by the pope bearing indications they should be destroyed.

The police officers testified in the trial of Paolo Gabriele, the pope's once-trusted butler who faces four years in prison if convicted of aggravated theft

for allegedly stealing papal documents and leaking them.

Prosecutors have said Gabriele, a devout 46-year-old father of three, confessed to leaking copies of the documents to journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi because he wanted to expose the "evil and corruption" in the church to help put it back on the right path.

The documents have ignited an uproar, for they revealed infighting and alleged corruption in the Vati-

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## First debate sets up high-risk moment

DENVER (AP) – President Barack Obama and Republican Mitt Romney come face to face for the first time in this presidential campaign tonight for a nationally televised debate that will give millions of Americans a chance to size up two fierce competitors in a moment of high-risk theater.

Romney is angling for a breakout performance in the three presi-

dential debates scheduled over the next three weeks.

Obama, well aware that the remaining five weeks of the race still offer enough time for tectonic shifts in his prospects, is determined to avoid any campaign-altering mistakes as he presses his case for a second term.

A pre-debate skirmish Tuesday over Vice President Joe Biden's passing reference to "a middle class that has been buried the last four years" demonstrated how just

a few words can mushroom into something larger during a heated contest for the White House.

Tonight's 9 p.m. Eastern Time faceoff between Obama and Romney on domestic policy at the University of Denver is sure to offer a blend of choreography and spontaneity: Both men have spent hours rehearsing smart lines and pithy comebacks with proxy opponents – yet know to expect the unexpected.

## Tractor fun



The theme was "green" Thursday at Puddle Duck Preschool. This included both the kids' clothes and the John Deere tractor, which John Friesen showed off at the school. His grandkids, Aiden (left) and Riley, got the first turn honking the horn.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



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