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COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Monday

April 29, 2013
Volume 124, Number 68
Serving Thomas County since 1888

Experts out to tour state wheat fields

WICHITA (AP) — Nearly 80 farmers and other agricultural experts will fan out across Kansas this week for the annual wheat quality tour amid mounting worries about crop damage from several hard freezes this spring.

The tour left today from Manhattan, with participants following six routes across the state to make more than 600 crop evaluations. The tour ends Thursday at the Kansas City Board of Trade with the group's announcement of its forecast for the 2013 crop.

Put on by the Wheat Quality Council, the event each year draws farmers, milling and baking companies, governmental agencies, retailers and foreign buyers to Kansas.

This year's tour will offer the first close-up look at the impact from April freezes interspersed with warm temperatures. Wheat is particularly vulnerable to freeze damage when it emerges from winter dormancy and begins to actively grow.

"As it progresses maturity-wise,

it becomes more vulnerable," said Jim Shroyer, a wheat specialist at Kansas State University.

Reports are already coming in from the southwest and west-central parts of the state about heavy freeze damage from the April 9-10 freeze, but it remains unclear how much damage the more recent freezes last week have inflicted on the crop. Freeze damage becomes more apparent when warm temperatures return.

Temperatures dipped into the 20s last week across Ellsworth, Great Bend, Pratt and other parts of Kansas.

"If there is any damage there, that is where I would anticipate it," Shroyer said.

This year's crop is 10 days behind normal development in a season battered by not only recent freezes but ongoing drought.

Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service reported in its weekly snapshot last week that the state's wheat crop is rated as 37 percent poor to very poor, 33 percent fair and 30 percent good to excellent.

Barbershop set for Saturday after snow delay

The Barbershop Harmony Diamond Jubilee has been rescheduled for 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Frahm Theater at Colby Community College.

The Prairie Statesmen of McCook, Neb., will join Colby's Tumbleweed Chorus as originally scheduled. Renaissance, a Denver group, will replace the Rusty Pipes.

Because of the changes, the performances will be free, says Rod Eisenbise of the Tumbleweed Chorus, which is a chapter of the

Barbershop Harmony Society.

Previously purchased tickets will be refunded or the money may be donated to the Adopt-a-School program or the Owen Herndon Memorial scholarship fund, which provides scholarships to Colby College students.

Call Larry Brenn at (785) 586-2384 to request a refund or arrange a donation before the concert.

The performances had been scheduled for March 23, but were postponed because of heavy snow that weekend.



Emergency medical technicians helped trucker Daniel Palumbo to a stretcher (above) after his semi-trailer rig caught a gust of wind and rolled over Friday afternoon just east of town on Interstate 70. The rig blocked the eastbound lanes (right), and it took two tow trucks to pull it upright before it could be dragged out of the way. Alan Brown and Chelsey Horney, both of Goodland (below), stood at the front of a long line of vehicles stalled by the accident.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



Truck wreck backs up I-70 traffic

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkans.com

A tractor-trailer rig caught by a gust of wind rolled over Friday evening, blocking the eastbound lanes of Interstate 70 just east of town for almost an hour.

Daniel R. Palumbo, 62, Mesquite, Texas, escaped major injury when he was westbound and his rig caught a gust of wind at 5:25 p.m. at mile marker 56, about two miles east of the Country Club Drive exit. The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Palumbo made it back on the roadway, leaving skid marks on the pavement, then apparently

overcorrected and lost control. The rig rolled onto its side and slid across the median into the eastbound lanes.

Erma Sander of Oakley was driving the first eastbound car. She said she saw Palumbo's rig slide across the highway in front of her and had time to stop before hitting it.

"We just saw him come across the highway and he laid down," she said. "All of a sudden, there he was."

Sander said she, her husband Marvin, and friend, Violet Kerr, were headed home from a trip to Colby. She said the truck's windshield just popped out, and Palumbo was able to walk out to ask them for help.

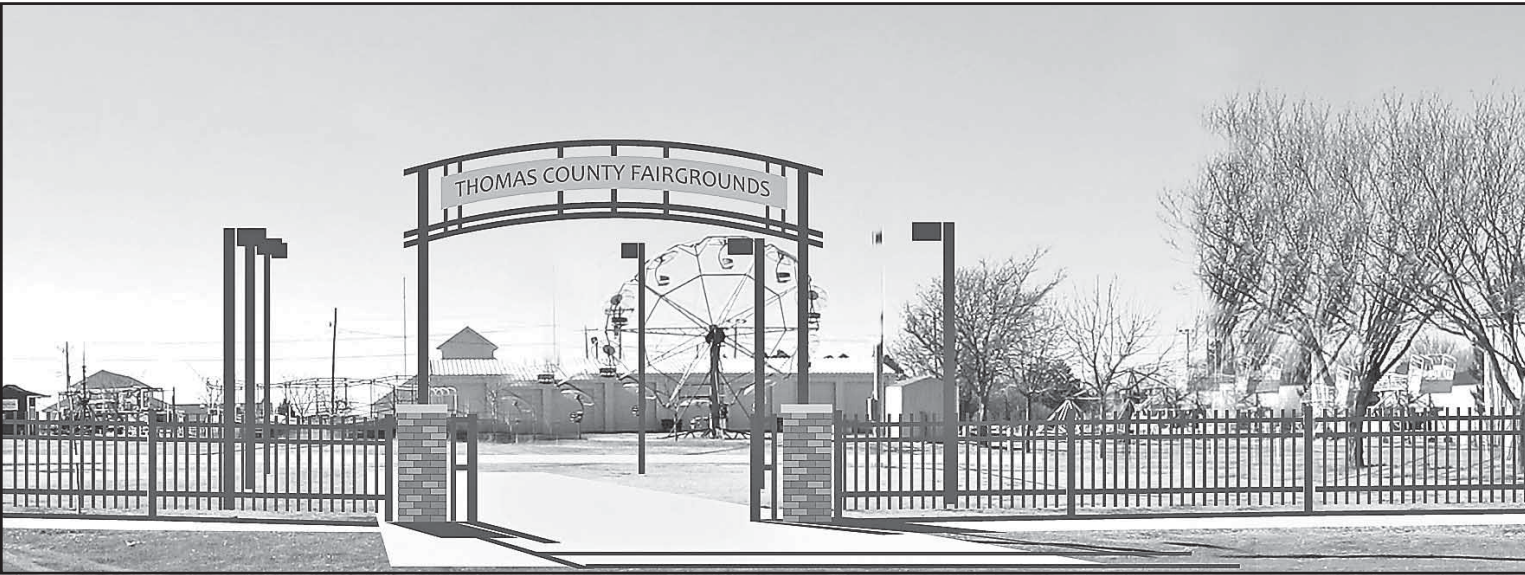
"He walked out of the windshield there,"

she said, "and just right out of there he came."

Palumbo, who was sitting in the Sanders's car when the ambulance arrived, walked to the stretcher with a half dozen people around him. He was taken to Citizen's Medical Center as a precaution, then released.

Dozens of trucks and cars backed up behind the wreck for nearly an hour after the accident, since the rig blocked both eastbound lanes. As soon as they could, officers started to divert drivers off the freeway at Country Club and explain alternate routes to them.

Two tow trucks were needed to pull the rig upright, and then out of the way.



COMMERCIAL SIGN

Planned improvements to the Thomas County fairgrounds entry include a fence and an archway over the road.

Board needs money to build entryway

By Heather Alwin

Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkans.com

The Thomas County Fair Board is seeking donations to build a new entryway, fence and sidewalk system for the fairgrounds.

"We're trying to make it look a lot better when people come into the fairgrounds," said board secretary Audrey Hines.

The new entry and sidewalk will cost about \$35,000, but board member Leland Jones said

it will make the grounds more user-friendly for handicapped visitors in addition to improving the looks of the area.

Plans include a wrought-iron fence, brick pillars, archway, handicapped parking area, lighting and sidewalks connecting key buildings. The entry gate, set back slightly from the fence, will have a place to hang plaques honoring donors.

Handicapped visitors will be able to park in front of a sidewalk that leads through the entry gate, and a large concrete pad will provide

a drop-off point for visitors who cannot walk long distances. Handicapped parking previously blocked fire lanes during large events, Jones said, but the new design has a gate to keep the fire lane clear.

Since alcohol is prohibited at the fairgrounds, he added, the board cannot raise money with alcohol sales like many other fair boards. Instead, the board relies on money from the county and building rentals through-

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Reorganization made payroll grow

TOPEKA (AP) — An increase in the number of state employees during fiscal year 2013 can be explained largely by reorganization of some agencies and more student employees at universities, officials with some of the agencies said.

The Kansas Department of Administration's Office of Personnel Services said the state had a total of 69,974 regular and temporary employees in fiscal year 2013, an increase of 143 from fiscal 2012, *The Topeka Capital-Journal* reported (bit.ly/11PUxfs) last week.

The largest cuts were in the Kansas Department for Children and Families, which had 348 fewer employees. The Kansas Department of Revenue had 134 fewer employees and the Kansas Department of Labor employed 97 fewer people.

Those numbers include 125 employees who were transferred from Children and Families to the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services under an executive order from Gov. Sam Brownback, said Angela de

Rocha, a spokeswoman for both agencies.

The Department of Revenue's numbers were unusual and came after a large numbers of retirements and other short-term occurrences, spokeswoman Jeannine Koranda said.

Three state universities reported a large increase in employees: Wichita State University had 291 more employees; Kansas State University increased 285; and The University of Kansas Medical Center added 228 jobs.

Most of those jobs are students, graduate assistants or nonstudent workers doing temporary work as part of federal grants or contracts, said Andy Tompkins, president and chief executive of the Board of Regents.

For example, The University of Kansas Medical Center had 141 temporary employees working as

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