

# Fireflies rare, little Grand Canyon near here

By John Van Nostrand

Free Press Publisher

Seeing fireflies is a rarity, but the little Grand Canyon will always be in northwest Kansas.

Of the thousands of motorists who drive through northwest Kansas along Interstate 70, there seems to be as many questions from those people about the area.

One of the people on the front lines of answering those questions is Ralph Fischer. Since it opened in 2004, Fischer has been the coordinator of the Colby Visitor's Center, located off of I-70 at the west Colby exit (exit 53).

Not only does Fischer want to provide an answer to those questions, he has to defend the area as well. Sometimes his defense is what ails people.

"A woman once said there is nothing to see in Kansas," he said. "I told her what was available around here and it still didn't make her happy. She was on her way to Denver and I mentioned the 80-foot Van Gogh replica painting in Goodland. The woman was excited about that," he said. "She was a Van Gogh fan."

Fischer said there are people who may be disappointed in northwest Kansas, or the entire state, but they are not at the end of the conversation or drive.

"I remember, there was a girl from Virginia who was looking at our panoramic picture of Colby. She said, 'My friends told me once I got to the Missouri-Kansas line to speed through Kansas because there is nothing to see. We think it's beautiful,'" Fischer said.

In terms of population, Colby is the largest town between Denver and Hays, about a 250-mile stretch of I-70. Most of the people who stop at the center are on their way to Colorado. Some people have asked Fischer what they can do in northwest Kansas.

Fischer said those anxious to get to Colorado and the Rocky Mountains from Colby need to be patient.

"People from the East Coast have different concepts of Kansas and Colorado. I tell them you go 150 miles from Colby and you still see wheat, buffalo grass and coyotes. You have to go west of Limon, Colo., to even see the mountains."

He reminds them of the places around northwest Kansas.



Colby's Visitor's Center, located off Interstate 70 exit 53, provides a variety of information of Kansas for tourists.

Photo by John Van Nostrand/Colby Free Press

"I ask them if they have ever seen the little Grand Canyon," he said.

The Little Grand Canyon is a nickname for the Arikaree Breaks located in the extreme northwest corner of Kansas near St. Francis. The breaks are a strip of rugged terrain carved out over the years by wind and water.

Fischer said the breaks resemble the Grand Canyon in Arizona and the Badlands in South Dakota, but on a much smaller scale. People can hike along the breaks.

Grazing cattle are common near the breaks. "Those cows have to have one leg six inches shorter on side the way they walk around the hills on one side," Fischer said. "And when you drive up through there, your car shifts to a lower gear. Really, it's beautiful country."

And there is always the chance to educate motorists.

Fischer said he has had some people ask what the "tall, white, round buildings are about every 10 to 15 miles." Fischer tells those people they are grain elevators.

"They hold wheat to make flour so you can

buy bread in New Jersey," Fischer said is his answer.

#### More information please

Fischer is not the only ambassador to answer questions about Colby and northwest Kansas. People who are more interested in living here

than visiting, ask Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce Director Holly Stephens.

"Usually through e-mail, people ask about the population, weather, what's there to do and even roads. Do we have good roads?,"



Stephens

Stephens said.

Most of the questions asked are expected, Stephens said.

"Several of the questions are the same ones we would ask going to a new area," she said.

But every so often somebody wants to know more.

Her office has created a relocation packet. In the packet are various brochures and information about services in the area, list of events, Chamber's newsletter, business directory and the list goes on.

"It's a chunk of change to mail it out," she said.

The packets are popular for new Colby Community College students, and their parents.

"Spring is a popular time to send those because they know they will go to school here," she said.

But every so often, Stephens said a question asked may need more time to find the answer. She said one person asked if Colby has fireflies.

"They are rare," she remembers answering, "usually at Villa High Park after heavy rains."

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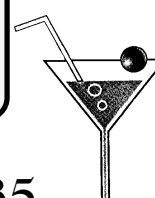
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# Prairie Museum features a little of everything

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A little of everything is on display at the Prairie Museum of Art and History in Colby.

Everything from the history of Thomas County to the Kuska family collection is on display at the museum, 1905 S. Franklin.

Director Sue Taylor said the museum is the repository for the county, and also houses the Thomas County Historical Society's materials.

That includes more than 60,000-70,000 photos, manuscripts and documents.

However, one of the biggest draws at the museum is the Kuska Collection.

That collection has more than 40,000 artifacts. About 10,000 of those are on display.

"We feature life on the High Plains and have the added bonus of the Kuska collection," Taylor said.

The Kuska Collection was amassed by former Colby resident Nellie Kuska. Her family donated the collection to the museum.

Taylor said Nellie and Joseph Kuska lived in Thomas County before moving to California. While in Colby, Nellie Kuska was the on-air personality for a radio show about antiques.

In California, the family operated a museum out of their home, showing off the items they had collected and called it the "Little Smithsonian of the West."



Visitors to the Prairie Museum of Art and History in Colby looked over pictures and information in the sod house, one of the buildings on the grounds that depicts life on the High Plains.

Photo by Tisha Cox/Colby Free Press

After Nellie died, the family had several options for the collection, but ended up donating

it to the Thomas County Historical Society.

"The family wanted to keep the collection

together," Taylor said.

All of that is inside the museum. Outside on the grounds, there is more to explore.

"We have the largest barn in captivity," she said.

The Cooper Barn, as it is called, is considered the largest in Kansas. It was moved in 1992 to the museum grounds from 16 miles northeast of town. The barn is about 70 years old, and was once used to house Hereford show cattle.

Visitors can explore the barn as well as the other buildings on the grounds. They are a sod house, country church, one-room school house and the Eller House, which features an herb garden.

Also on display this summer is art by students from Colby High School.

In addition to the exhibits, the museum is currently making a few changes to its display space.

One of the galleries was renovated to open up floor space for temporary exhibits, classes or events. They still have the same exhibits on display, and only moved things around to be better able to use the space they have.

Taylor said they are working on a children's interactive space, to be called the Kansas Kid's Corner.

This fall, the museum will again host the Celebration on the High Plains. The event is Sept. 8, and will feature a concert by country artist Shooter Jennings, the son of the late Waylon Jennings.

The museum is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 1-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

For information, call (785) 460-4590 or e-mail prairiem@st-tel.net.

## Silhouettes, sign mark Army detail massacre site

The Kidder Massacre site northeast of Goodland has silhouettes of a cavalryman with a gun and an Indian on a horse, shadows of a battle that took place 140 years ago.

A detail including Lt. Lyman S. Kidder and 10 soldiers died along Beaver Creek in July 1867. The site is north of Edson on County Road 28, where a memorial marker flags drivers at the corner of road 77. The silhouettes, 1 1/2 miles east of the marker on the north side. They are over 100 yards from the road.

Kidder and his men set out from Fort Sedgewick near Julesburg, Colo., with dispatches from Gen. William T. Sherman to be delivered to Col. George A. Custer, according to the book "A Dispatch to Custer — The Tragedy of Lieutenant Kidder" by Randy Johnson

and Nancy Allan.

Not finding Custer at his camp on the Republican River, the book said, authorities concluded Kidder assumed Custer had moved his force to Fort Wallace and headed in that direction.

Kidder, his men and his guide, a Sioux scout named Red Bead, encountered Indians along the Beaver Creek in the northeast corner of Sherman County. Historical evidence indicates the men were attacked by about 500 Indians and tried to flee, fighting all the way.

The men ended up in a ravine, surrounded by Indians, trying to shoot their way out. When Kidder and his men did not show up, Custer set out to look for them.

Custer found the bodies of the men, many of them scalped and in other ways disfigured. The

Indians had removed most of their clothes. Disfigurement made identification difficult, but there was no doubt it was Kidder and his men.

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# Statue makes 'Buffalo Bill' larger than life

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A constantly changing site five miles south of Interstate 70 at Oakley has allowed local and international visitors an opportunity to learn about the life of William Frederic "Buffalo Bill" Cody.

Located at the intersection of Second Ave. and U.S. Highway 83 — seven miles south of I-70 — a twice larger than life bronze sculpture of Buffalo Bill on horseback hunting a buffalo sits atop a man-made hill. The sculpture was created by Leoti artist Charlie Norton, weighs 9,000 pounds and is valued at \$500,000.

It has drawn visitors from as near as Oakley to as far away as Canada, Japan, South Korea, Spain, Mexico and Germany.

The sculpture is only the beginning of what Wild West Historical Foundation, Inc., board of directors plan for Oakley. Secondary to the sculpture is the Buffalo Bill Heritage Walk which takes visitors to downtown Oakley.

"There are 10 boxes and one in the works," Linda Plummer, a board member said.

Lighted wooden shadow boxes, which are about two and one-half feet wide by four-feet tall, sit in windows of downtown businesses along three blocks of Center Avenue. Inside each box is memorabilia such as clothing and photographs of Cody, his family, friends and associates.

"Businesses have commented they see people walking by and see them reading everything," Jerry Robben, a board member, said.

The shadow boxes allow visitors to view Cody's life as a hero, including history about the legendary contest, which gave him his claim to fame. That contest was between Cody and William Comstock, both buffalo hunters, who wagered \$500 to see who could shoot and kill the most buffalo in a set period of time. Cody won the contest, killing 69 buffalo to Comstock's 46.

Each shadowbox has a theme, such as "Hero's Life," "Famed Entrepreneur" and "Celebrated Showman," which let the viewer have a glimpse at Cody's years as a buffalo hunter businessman and marksman.

And, the life of Cody's famous sidekick, Annie Oakley, is showcased in a shadow box in the 100 block of Center Ave. bearing the



The larger than life statue of Buffalo Bill is about seven miles south of I-70 on U.S. 83.

theme "America's Markswoman."

Through the means of an AM short-wave radio and antenna, the foundation broadcasts the history of Buffalo Bill and the tourist attraction at 1610 AM. Signage along roadways designates the station to which listeners can hear the broadcast.

The latest push by the Wild West Foundation is one to erect a story board at the sculpture site. The story board will be called, "Story Board of Buffalo Bill and the Interpretation of Northwest Kansas Heritage."

The double-sided five-panel story board will be free-standing and allow visitors on both sides to learn even more about Oakley's historic features. The overall dimension of the story board will be 8-foot wide and 16-feet long. The panels will have digital prints mounted to them, which showcase the sculpture, historians and

Norton's development of the sculpture.

The \$15,000 project is made possible by a grant from the Kansas Humanities Council Grant.

"Heritage tourism grants are intended to connect people with ideas about shared history and support projects that engage the public with Kansas heritage," Rawlene Keller said. "One of the criteria the Humanities Council requests is that we have a humanities professional consultant be part of our project."

The professional being utilized as part of the grant's requirements will be Dr. Paul Fee of Cody, Wyo., senior curator of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody from 1981 to 2001.

"Dr. Fees is a self-employed historian consulting all over America with museums, media, and historic sites," Keller said. "He brings expertise and experience of the life of William Cody and cultural history of the American West."

As part of the story board project, Keller said Fees will research and develop content for the interpretive panels. Topics include the buffalo controversy, northwest Kansas Native Americans, regional fossil history, the birthplace of the Buffalo Bill legend, Annie Oakley, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Norton as the artist of the Buffalo Bill sculpture, native animals and the regional aquifer and farming practices.

For more information about the Wild West Historical Foundation projects contact Keller at (785) 672-3031.

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# Flatlander Fall Festival; something for everyone

By Pat Schiefen

[pjschiefen@nwkansas.com](mailto:pjschiefen@nwkansas.com)

The annual Flatlander Fall Festival will be held in Goodland on Friday through Sunday, Sept. 28 to 30.

The festival starts on Friday with the Flatlanders Golf Tournament at the Sugar Hills Golf Club and the first night of auto racing on the 18th Annual Fall Classic at the Sherman County Speedway.

On Saturday Main Avenue is blocked for games, vendors and food booths in the center part of town.

On the north end of Main from Eighth to 10th the Northwest Kansas Bike Show will feature many classes of motorcycles from the biggest down to the smallest and some unique bikes. In the afternoon the bikers show their riding skills in a series of games followed by a dinner and awards ceremony. Around 8 p.m. they have a parade down Main to close out the day. On Sunday the bikers have a worship service and a poker run.

Games on Main between 10th and 12th usu-

ally include a dunk tank, rope ladder, inflated slides and others. The games are fund raisers for the different departments at the Northwest Kansas Technical College. There is usually face painting and the Carnegie Arts Center tries to have an activities like sidewalk drawing or mural painting.

Greg Williams of Just Ponds and More, 1010 Main, had a catch and release pond with catfish for kids of all ages to catch. Food booths include bake sales by various churches and organizations, sloppy joes, hamburgers, hot dogs, clam chowder, snow cones, kettle corn, Mexican food and funnel cakes. There will also be a beer garden.

One of the favorite attractions is the "Scruffy Dog Contest" sponsored by KLOE and the Northwest Kansas Animal Shelter. There is live entertainment during the day from country to pop. Vendors sell handmade items, jewelry and more.

From 12th to 14th the street is lined with cars from the Early Iron Car Show and Rod Run. Sunday the 200 car owners gather in front of Central Elementary School for awards and

Bike games (above) are a feature of the Northwest Kansas Bike Show, and there is a parade at 8 p.m. on Saturday. The Early Iron Car Show (above left) shows off over 200 classic cars, and the awards ceremony is held on Sunday morning.

Photos by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

prizes.

Sunday there will be a Picnic in the Park at Chambers Park a block west of Main at 13th, with live music and a hot dog and hamburger feed. Vendors will be able to set up their booths.

Every other year the Prairie Piecemakers Quilt Guild holds a quilt show. The next show will be in 2008.

The High Plains Museum also schedules a special event or display.



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# Oakley museum features prehistoric past

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Looking at it now, one wouldn't think Kansas ever had much water. More than 100 million years ago, Kansas was under water.

And the Fick Fossil and History Museum in Oakley is dedicated to Logan County's prehistory and more recent history.

Director Janet Bean said the museum, at 700 W. Third, is well-known.

"The museum is world-famous," Bean said. "We are one of the top 25 museums in the country, according to the San Francisco Chronicle."

That designation came about because of the folk art by Vi Fick.

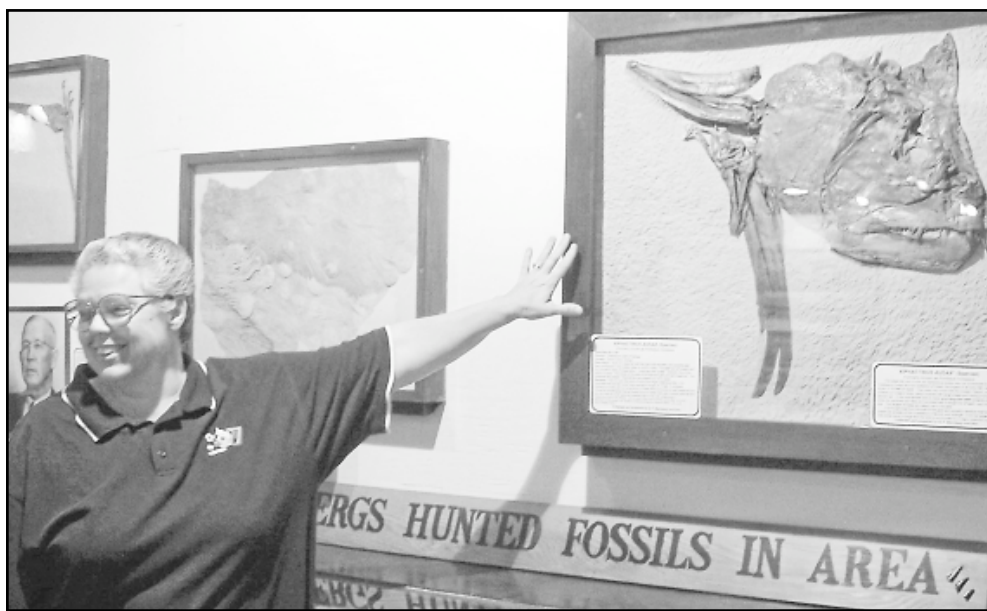
"She uses fossils in most of her artwork," Bean said.

Vi and Earnest Fick donated their fossil collection on the condition the city would build a place to house it.

They hunted fossils in the area, and owned a ranch down by the Monument Rocks in southern Logan County. Most of their fossils they dug themselves, but some were gifts.

The museum, opened in 1975, is unique for its size, considering it has fossils that are examples of the life once inhabiting the Cretaceous Interior Seaway. The Midwest was once submerged all the way from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

Fossils on display represent some of the largest and smallest creatures once living in the area.



Janet Bean, director of the Fick Fossil and History Museum in Oakley, showed off one of the museum's many fossils.

Photo by Jan Katz Ackerman/Colby Free Press

One is the oldest documented mosasaur skull in the world. A mosasaur was a large marine reptile, with a long, serpentine body. The largest of these found were up to 40 feet long.

"Another unique feature of our museum is all the fossils are real," Bean said. "None of them are reproductions."

Also unique is the plesiosaur paddle, which

bears scars from a shark attack. The paddle is special because intact plesiosaur fossils are rare.

Some museums have casts, or replicas of fossils in their collections.

Another interesting feature are the more than 10,000 shark teeth on display. About 3,000 of those teeth were used by Vi Fick to create a picture of a shark.

Fossils from diving birds are part of the museum's exhibit. They are another rare find, because bird bones are hollow and have a tendency to disintegrate with age.

Bean said more recent history includes life in Logan County during the 1880s.

"One of our main displays is a photo display with over 1,000 photos," she said.

The museum also features an 1886 depot and a reproduction of the Pratter Creamery, which was important to the community's history in the early 1900s.

An 1997 printing press from the Oakley Graphic is on display.

"We also have a sod house inside the museum," she said.

Also inside is Fred, a stuffed bison, that visitors can touch and have their picture taken with.

Bean said the museum also has an account of the German family massacre, which happened in the late 1800s.

The family left its wagon train, and was attacked by Indians near what is now Russell Springs. The mother, father and three oldest children were killed.

The four youngest were kidnapped, but the U.S. Cavalry pursued and rescued the children.

The museum's summer hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday.

For information, call (785) 672-4839.

## Busy summer schedule of events in Goodland, Sherman County

This is a partial list of summer and fall events scheduled in Goodland and Sherman County

### June

**June 7-9** — Sweet Swinger Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.

**June 10** — Smokey Gardens Archery Club. Shoot begins at 1 p.m. Range is east on 18th Street, east of Arcade by the railroad tracks. 785-890-5174 or 785-890-5358.

**June 16** — Sherman County Speedway Races, first race at 6:30 p.m., 785-821-1128 or 785-890-5103. Mini Stock - Econo - Bomber - Super Stock - Modified

**June 23-24** — The 2007 "Slice of Life" Benefit Auction will be held on Saturday, June 23 and the Golf Tournament will be held on Sunday, June 24. The VIP Barbecue will be held on Friday, June 22. We will have a host of celebrities representing

the film industry, NBA, NFL, baseball, and many others. For more information on these events, call Brenda McCants at 785-890-6036. [www.goodlandregional.com/getpage.php?name=slice](http://www.goodlandregional.com/getpage.php?name=slice)

### July

**July 4** — Freedom Fest - Sherman County Fairgrounds, 785-899-7130.

**July 4** — Club Flag Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.

**July 7** — Sherman County Speedway Races, first race at 6:30 p.m., 785-821-1128 or 785-890-5103. Mini Stock - Econo - Bomber - Super Stock - Modified

**July 8** — NW KS Animal Shelter Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills

See SCHEDULE, Page 12

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# Soddy gives visitors break from city noises

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Star-News

You notice the wind sweeping over the prairie grass as you bump along on the dirt road. As you pull into the driveway, the soddy looks small against the backdrop of grass pastures on hills rolling for miles around.

As you enter the 100-year-old sod house, you can't help thinking how adorable the little wood/coal stove in the kitchen is and wonder whether the pump at the kitchen sink works. (It does.)

As you take a look around, you

can't help but notice how thick the walls are (about two feet), how rustic the decor and how old the black-and-white photos on the walls.

You can't help feeling you have stepped back in time, as you forget the horsepower that brought you here was under the hood and you really don't notice the electric lights. (You're used to those after all.)

Call it a real prairie experience. City folks seem to like it.

The Minor Family Sod House Bed and Breakfast, 17 miles north of Brewster and a little west, was built

in 1907, later than most, and is one of few surviving original soddies.

Nestled in an area steeped in history, the soddy is a reminder of times past. In the southwest corner of Rawlins County, near the Cheyenne, Sherman and Thomas county borders, it is 2 1/2 miles from the site of the Dewey-Berry shoot-out in May 1903 and is near the Dewey Ranch and the site of the Kidder Massacre in 1867.

The owners, Fred and Lesa Juenemann, are great-grandchildren of Tom and Mary Minor, who bought

the house in 1909 and became friends with their neighbors and former owners of the property, the Deweys.

The Juenemanns are helping to keep the history of northwest Kansas alive by preserving the soddy and by providing plenty of historic reading material, with pictures, for their guests.

Several books and scrapbooks on the large round table in the parlor tell tales of the Kidder Massacre, the Dewey-Berry gun fight, the Last Vigilante Hanging in Kansas, the Cheyenne Hole Massacre, Fort Wal-

lace and Sheridan, the wickedest little town in Kansas. There are also books telling about sod houses and how they were built.

The soddy, which served as a post office and was on the map as Minor, Kan., is on the National Register of Historic Places for two reasons, Fred Juenemann said: because it's an original sod house and because there was a post office on the property for 10 years.

Call the Juenemanns at (785) 694-2575.

# Busy summer schedule of golf, racing, festivals in Sherman County

SCHEDULE, from Page 11

Golf Club, 785-899-2785.  
**July 12** — Senior Social Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.  
**July 15** — Smokey Gardens Archery Club. Shoot begins at 1 p.m. Range is east on 18th Street, east of Arcade by the railroad tracks. 785-890-5174 or 785-890-5358.  
**July 21** — Sherman County Speedway Races, first race at 6:30 p.m., 785-821-1128 or 785-890-5103. Mini Stock - Econo - Bomber - Super Stock - Modified - 1200 Outlaw Sprints  
**July 21-22** — Sunflower Golf Tournament (3 man

team) at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.  
**July 29** — Tri-State Classic Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.  
**July 28 to Aug. 4** — Northwest Kansas District Free Fair, 785-890-4880. Fair Parade Saturday, July 28th.

**August**

**Aug. 18** — 15th Annual Bill Gray Memorial, Sherman County Speedway, first race at 6:30 p.m., 785-821-1128 or 785-890-5103. Mini Stock - Econo - Bomber - Super Stock - Modified - 305 Sprints  
**Aug. 18-19** — Goodlington Golf Tournament (Member & Guest) at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.  
**Aug. 25** — Goodland Activities Center Night Golf

Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785. www.goodlandnet.com/gac

**September**

**Sept. 1** — Sherman County Speedway Races, first race at 6:30 p.m., 785-821-1128 or 785-890-5103. Mini Stock - Econo - Bomber - Super Stock - Modified  
**Sept. 9** — SHGC Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.  
**Sept. 9** — Smokey Gardens Archery Club. Shoot begins at 1 p.m. Range is east on 18th Street, east of Arcade by the railroad tracks. 785-890-5174 or 785-890-5358.  
**Sept. 16** — Two Couple Scramble Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.

**Sept. 28-30** — Flatlander Fall Festival, Motorcycle Show, Early Iron Rod Ron. Street Festival and more. 785-899-9290 or 785-890-3515, www.flatlanderfestival.com, nwkbs@msn.com, earlyiron\_goodland@hotmail.com

**Sept. 28** — Flatlanders Golf Tournament at Sugar Hills Golf Club, 785-899-2785.

**Sept. 28-29** — 18th Annual Flatlander Fall Classic Sherman County Speedway Races, 6:30 p.m., 785-821-1128 or 785-890-5103. Mini Stock - Econo - Bomber - Super Stock - Modified

**October**


**Oct. 6** — Kara Bentzinger Memorial Gymkhana, Sherman County Fairgrounds. Rodeo activities for all ages, including, barrel racing, pole bending, rop-

ing, goat tying, and more. Call 785-890-2653 or 785-899-3847, website: www.karamemorial.org

**November**



**Nov. 17** — NU PHU MU Food and Gift Extravaganza at Max Jones Fieldhouse, 13th and Arcade. Craft fair with food and craft booths. Artists in the tri-state area showcase their talents. Something for everyone. For more information call 785-890-6261.

**Nov. 17** — "We Did It Craft Fair" at Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall 824 Main. Craft fair with food and craft booths. Artists in the tri-state area showcase their talents. Something for everyone. For more information please call 785-899-5430.



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