

HAXTUN-FLEMING HERALD

"What can we reason but from what we know?" —Alexander Pope

Haxtun, Colorado

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This Weeks' Features ...

HHD Girls' Night Out — "Reaching For The Stars"

The fourth annual Haxtun Hospital District Girls' Night Out Event was held Feb. 23 at the Haxtun Community Center. The event featured the traditional format linking together exceptional health education and special entertainment. In spite of several conflicts including inclement weather, many women came out to support the event.

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Haxtun students sweep essay contest

The Colorado General Assembly is half-way through its 120-day session that ends on May 11. The biggest news out of the State Capitol at midpoint is the introduction of a long-awaited solution to the State's transportation funding problems.

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(Herald photo by Candie Salyards)

BURNT metal, rubble and dust are all that remain just past a tree row at the home of Mike and Susan Salyards' house north of Haxtun. The fire swept through the property destroying most outbuildings and coming within feet of the home that was saved by fire crews.

Volunteers join forces following grass fire

By Candie Salyards
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Hellen Keller said, "alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Those words speak of actions from the Haxtun community and kind hearted individuals from all over the county, state and country following a 32,000-acre grass fire that swept across Phillips and Logan counties last week. Donations for those who fought, lost or volunteered throughout the blaze that burned for several days have come from neighbors, friends, family members and complete strangers hundreds of miles away.

Monday, March 6 and the days following will forever be engraved in the lives of those who witnessed total destruction and devastation but also the reminder of rural country living and the heartfelt display of dedication and sacrifice from those who live here.

"We are overwhelmed," Sara Firme said days after her family lost their home, outbuildings and equipment to the fire. "You watch these things happen to other people and you help out but you never expect it to happen to you. It's very humbling."

Sara and her husband Jared lost their home early Monday evening as the fire spread to their farm north of Haxtun on County Road 7. They since have found a place to stay while they begin the process of rebuilding their farming heritage on land that has been in the family for decades.

"Thank you ... for all the support and to the firemen and all the volunteers," Firme said of the outpouring of kindness shown to the family over the past week.

Four homes were lost in the fire that began just before noon last Monday near Proctor. Lieutenant Dennis Aulston with the Logan County Sheriff's Office said the blaze began on private property near the South Platte river. The fire spread southeast due to winds ranging from 40-60 miles per hour over 26 miles over land. Total, 32,563 acres were torched.

Aulston said at this time information on how the fire started is not being released. He said the Logan County Sheriff's Office

and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation are taking the lead on the investigation and that no arrests or warrants had been issued as of Monday afternoon.

In addition to Firme's, Haxtun community resident Pam Adams and Logan County residents Bill Bruntz and Richard and Donna Lawler lost their homes last Monday.

As soon as the fire's path and destruction was evident, organizers and community members began to rally together for the almost 20 fire departments that came to assist with the blaze, command staff stationed at the Haxtun Community Center and for those who were in the fire's path. Within no time volunteers were stationed at the fire hall organizing food, drinks and snacks for firemen while gathering eye drops for those coming in with smoke and dust in their eyes in addition to collecting toiletries and other supplies for firemen who had traveled from long distances to offer assistance.

Others began to collect clothes, household items, food and cleaning supplies for those affected by the fire, smoke and dust. As of Friday afternoon, tables upon tables and shelf after shelf were stocked with donations at Pro-Till along Haxtun's main street for those who need it.

"It's indescribable to me, just the sheer volume of it," Alicia Schram said of the donations that continue to pour in this week. Schram and other community volunteers set up a Facebook page "Haxtun Community Fire Relief" to offer assistance and serve as an avenue of communication for all those affected. The first post made to the page reached over 31,600 people, Schram said. Donations, in forms of money, gift cards, clothes, toys, household items and ag related products have come from as far as Florida, Utah and New Mexico.

Schram said she received a message from officials at Sidney Schools in Nebraska with a donation of over \$1,500; students used their day off of school last week to work for area businesses and picked up trash for donations to the fire relief fund. Others have done the same, she said, like area FFA chapters who

volunteered their time to work for donations to give to fire relief.

As news broke on the evening of March 8 that the fire was 100 percent contained, local and county officials began collecting information on the overwhelming amount of devastation caused by the fire. Local rancher Kyle McConnell was among those who lost cattle in the fire that spread across two counties. McConnell's GoFundMe page says the rancher lost over 180 head of cattle totaling nearly \$380,000. A press release from Kyle Moulton, Logan County Emergency Management, said it's been reported that nearly 200 head of cattle perished in the fire. At least one horse had to be put down due to injuries suffered from the blaze.

Since the smoke cleared and hot spots are out, farmers and ranchers have scrambled to plant oats on land to help keep dirt from blowing and to retain moisture in the soil. In addition to donations of oats, the farming community has seen gifts of hay, fencing products and other items to help start rebuilding. Others have pledged cow/calf pairs to those who lost their ranching operations to begin the rebuilding process.

How to help

For information on how to help those affected by the fire, visit the Haxtun Community Fire Relief page on Facebook. The page features links to individual family GoFundMe pages as well as information to donate locally.

Accounts have been set up at the Haxtun Community Federal Credit Union for general fire relief as well as specific areas in need. Other accounts include those for individual families, local fire departments and agriculture.

According to emergency managers and local officials, no major injuries were reported throughout the fire and the days following, however some fire departments are beginning to report damage to equipment and vehicles.

Phillips and Logan county commissioners have set up a Disaster Assistance Center meeting to provide opportunities for the fire

(See Fire Relief, page 16)

\$35/year within 50-mile radius; \$40/year outside 50-mile radius

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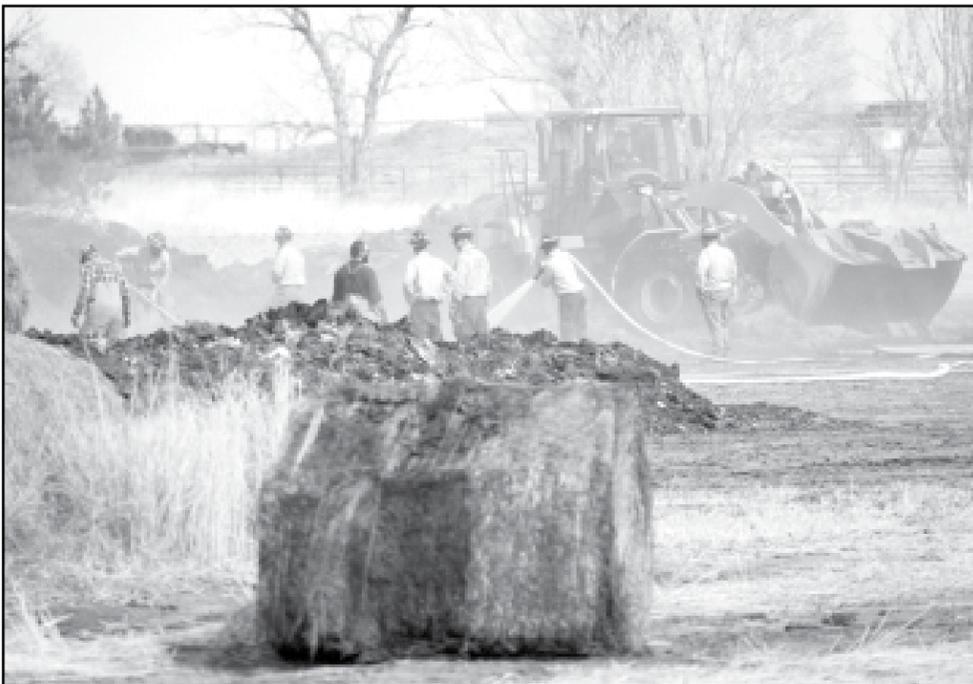
(Herald photo by Candie Salyards)

LYNN Seger suffered the loss of several outbuildings and other damages to his farm north of town during the fire. Crews were able to save his home, however, flames came dangerously close to the home's perimeter.



(Herald photo by Candie Salyards)

FLAMES came within feet of Mike and Susan Salyards' house and garage, melting the siding on the sides of the structures.



(Herald photo by Candie Salyards)

FIRE CREWS and volunteers with loaders and other heavy equipment work to spread out piles of hay at Matt and Jessica Firme's house on Wednesday afternoon in hopes to douse the smoldering stacks.



(Herald photo by Candie Salyards)

WHAT REMAINS of Jared and Sara Firme's home northeast of Haxtun. Haxtun volunteer firemen stayed at the location throughout the night saving what they could and controlling the rest of the burn site.