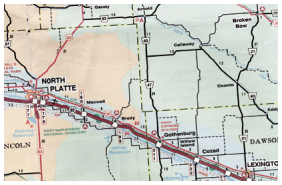

Taken from the news columns of area newspapers.

Helium balloon travels 700 miles from Cozad

COZAD—A helium balloon released from Cozad Bible Church on Oct. 3 was discovered in Rantoul, IL, about 120 miles south of Chicago. It's estimated the balloon traveled about 700 miles. Adventure Club started their year with what has become an annual helium balloon release when a couple found the balloon. When they read the Bible verse attached, Psalm 46:1, they were surprised since it was the same verse that they had already read in a daily devotion that morning.—reported in the Tri-City Trib.

Broken Bow wind farm officially dedicated

BROKEN BOW—Custer County has some serious bragging rights since Oct. 16 when Edison Mission Energy dedicated a 50-turbine wind farm along with city and county leaders and joined by energy developers from across the United States as well as land owners. The $145 million project known as Broken Bow LLC is located approximately three miles northeast of the city and is capable of generating up to 80 megawatts of electricity, enough to meet the needs of about 25,000 homes in Nebraska. Gov. Dave Heineman, EME President Pedro Pizarro and Nebraska Public Power District President and CEO Pat Poe were also on hand to take part in the dedication ceremony.—reported in the Custer County Chief.

Tree trunks promote Ogallala's heritage

OGALLALA—Those in Ogallala don't have to go far to see a tribute to the Old West and the area's heritage, just drive by Greg Beal's law office on West A Street. Rick Burgess, a North Platte artist, has been sculpting two tree trunks into larger-than-life sized characters including

an Indian and a cowboy. Beal decided to have the sculptures done as a tribute to the heritage, Ogallala as the Cowboy Capital, and to the early settlers and the American Indian when he learned that two tall elm trees had to be cut down. The Indian faces south and is holding a peace pipe, and the cowboy is facing north and does not bear a weapon, as a peaceful exchange between the two.—reported in the Keith County News.

Dry land lease program is approved by board

CURTIS—The Middle Republican NRD (MRNRD) Board of Directors accepted a budget that was modified by an additional million dollars during a September meeting. At a recent meeting, the board formerly accepted those additional dollars from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to implement incentive programs that will reduce the volume of ground water pumping in the year 2013. One of those programs will be a dry year lease program. In response to the possibility of a Compact Call Year, the District will be accepting bids from district irrigators to lease ground water irrigated acres to the district for the 2013 crop year.—reported in the Frontier County Enterprise.

School board approves merger study proposal

ARNOLD—School District No. 89 Board members recently discussed the proposed merger of the Loup Valley and Sandhills Conferences. After much consideration, the board unanimously approved a proposal to study the merger as Callaway officials voted to approve the study by a 5-1 vote. The schools were asked to develop a proposal with their boards in an outline which could then be further discussed. If the schools can come to an agreement, the merger would likely take place in the 2014-15 school year and would include coop sports as well as other activities including music, speech and one-acts. The proposed new conference would probably be an East/West Conference and have a few more teams and an increased geographic area, according to officials.—reported in the Arnold Sentinel.

Students compete for experiment in space

CALLAWAY—Members of the Callaway junior science class are working to come up with a unique and viable experiment that meets strict specifications in competition with others to be chosen for a trip into space. The class is competing in the Student Space Flight Experiments

Program (SSFEP) in hopes that whatever experiment they come up with will be judged worthy to make the next flight called Mission 3 to the International Space Station. The biggest challenge thus far is that the experiment must fit in a glass tube the size of a writing pen.—reported in the Callaway Courier.