

New look



The lot south of the Stull Gymnasium was turned into "Tent City" on Sunday by many of the participants in Biking Across Kansas who preferred to sleep outside rather than in the gym and adjoining buildings. This was the scene early Monday morning before the bikers prepared to depart Norton. — Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

J.C. Penney closing Goodland store

By TOM BETZ

ntbetz@nwkansas.com

Employees at Goodland's J.C. Penney's were told last Tuesday the store would close in September.

Word of the announcement spread around town, and Elizabeth Riley, one of the three key holders at the store, confirmed the news Wednesday afternoon.

She said she, Patsy Gresty and Diana Nichols were told Tuesday morning before the store opened by store manager Lorri Madden of McCook and the district manager, Jim Brandt from the Wichita Penney's office.

Gresty, who has been with the store for more than 15 years said she was told to refer questions to Madden. A call to McCook Wednesday did not find Madden at the office, but a message was left at her home. Thursday morning when a call was placed to the McCook J.C. Penney's the person answering the phone said Madden would be in the Goodland store in the afternoon.

Riley said the store has had a good bottom line, but that the office in Wichita was concerned about the volume of merchandise the store sells.

Riley, who has been at the store for 11 years, said they have been trying to do what they could to keep the store going, and in recent

years it has been recognized as the best in the district and for having the best store manager. She said Gresty has been with the store for more than 15 years and Nichols had worked there for about five.

"We were told if we could do a few of those things, they would look at getting us a bigger store," Riley said, "but when I asked at a dinner they had to celebrate our good efforts, I was told that was not going to happen."

"I know if we had a larger store and had a shoe department, we could double our sales. When I told Jim that, he said it was probably true, but again that it was not going to happen."

Riley said when they were called to come to the store early on Tuesday, the employees felt something was going to happen, but closing was not what they expected. She said the company had already announced a cutback in the number of truck deliveries to one a week because of increased transportation costs.

"We usually have our back-to-school stuff coming in now, but have not received any of it," Riley said. "Now we know why. Do you know any place that will be hiring?"

She said the employees were given papers from Penney's about how they were going to take care of them when the store closes,

but when asked if they offered a job in another Penney's store, she said, "They said they would talk to Wal-Mart for us."

News of the announcement was being spread through several channels, including e-mails, and people were being urged to start a letter campaign to try to change the minds of Penney's management.

"The J.C. Penney store will be closing in Goodland on Sept. 1, 2008," read an e-mail from Daniel Hayden of Bankwest. "This is a long shot, but we need to ask everyone we know to write a letter and e-mail J.C. Penney's corporate office in Plano, Texas."

"We need everyone in our community, and I am talking about Sharon Springs, Colby, Burlington, Idalia, Yuma, St. Francis, Cheyenne Wells, and Goodland, to send them letters and e-mails and show them this store is important to this area."

"Yes, this is an underdog fight, but sometimes the underdog can win. So I am asking everyone to band together and let this corporation know how important this store is to our area."

"The closing of this store will not only affect Goodland, but it will effect all of northwest Kansas and northeast Colorado."

Shelly Thompson, cashier at Bankwest, suggested letters to:

Myron (Mike) Ullman III, chairman and chief executive officer; Kenneth Hicks, president, chief merchandising officer and director; and Robert Cavanaugh, executive vice president and chief financial officer, at J.C. Penney Co, 6501 Legacy Drive, Plano TX 75024.

For those who want to send an e-mail, the address is jpcorpcomm@jcpenny.com. Three additional contacts include Tim Lyons corporate stores communications manager, Darcie Brossart and Quinton Crenshaw, J.C. Penney's corporate communications contacts.

"If we get enough letters flowing into their offices asking that the store not be closed, maybe we can prevent the closure," Hayden said.

Thursday J.C. Penney reported on their corporate web site that over all store sales decreased 4.4 percent for May, compared to a 0.9 percent decrease last year. Total sales in May decreased 2.4 percent.

Penney's reported the top performing merchandise divisions during the month were in family footwear and women's accessories, while fine jewelry and most home categories experienced weaker sales. Geographically, the best performing region of the country was the northwest.

Oldest



Wanda Groves, 86, of Goodland, is the oldest cyclist on Biking Across Kansas. She is shown here outside her tent Sunday evening as she prepared to get some sleep so she would be fresh for Monday's ride to Smith Center. — Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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Another important date looms for two incentives programs

The Kansas Natural Resources Conservation Service at Salina said this week that June 20 is the cutoff date for the final Fiscal Year 2008 signup for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, including Ground and Surface Water Conservation and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

Funding decisions will be made by July 11. "The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is available to help address the unique circumstances and concerns of limited resource and beginning farmers and ranchers, who have natural resource concerns that

need to be addressed on their land," said Thomas A. Perrin, acting state conservationist.

"In Kansas, limited resource and beginning farmers and ranchers may receive a higher payment rate through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for structural and vegetative practices," he said.

Agricultural producers interested in participating in any of these three programs can apply at any time at their U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center at their local Natural Resources Conservation Service office or conservation district office.

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