

Take advantage of the church listings to find out when and where to go.

Page 4&5

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

Norton teams win first round of Topside Tipoff tournament.

Page 10

Friday

December 12, 2003

Norton, Kansas
Home of Doris Mizell

Briefly

Elementary concert planned

First through sixth graders from Eisenhower Elementary will present their annual Winter Concert, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the East Campus gym on Monday.

The fifth and sixth-grade bands will be playing seasonal carols that will be sure to get everyone in the holiday spirit.

The vocal portion of the program will begin at 7 p.m. and will include seasonal and holiday songs to bring many smiles, warm hearts and fill the air with Christmas cheer.

The public is invited.

Deadline nears for taxes, tags

The deadline for the first half of 2003 property taxes to be paid without penalty is Monday, Dec. 22.

Remember to take or send in the stubs from your tax statements to ensure proper credit.

The vehicle tag deadline for persons or businesses whose last name begins with "U", "X", "Y" or "Z" will be at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 31. The treasurer's office will be closed Thursday, Dec. 25, Friday, Dec. 26, and Thursday, Jan. 1. The computers will be turned off at 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 31 for year-end balancing.

Remember to take or include your proof of insurance, which includes the vehicle identification number, policy number and expiration date, for each vehicle being renewed.

Drivers license renewals can be done Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you have any questions, please call the treasurer's office at 877-5795.

Weather

Forecast:

Tonight — Mostly cloudy with patchy freezing fog. Lows around 16. South winds 5 to 10 mph. **Saturday** — Partly cloudy with highs in the mid 30s.

Saturday Night — Partly cloudy with lows around 19. **Sunday** — Partly cloudy and warmer with highs around 50. **Sunday Night** — Partly cloudy with lows in the mid 20s. Monday — Mostly cloudy with a 60 percent chance of rain.

Howell report:

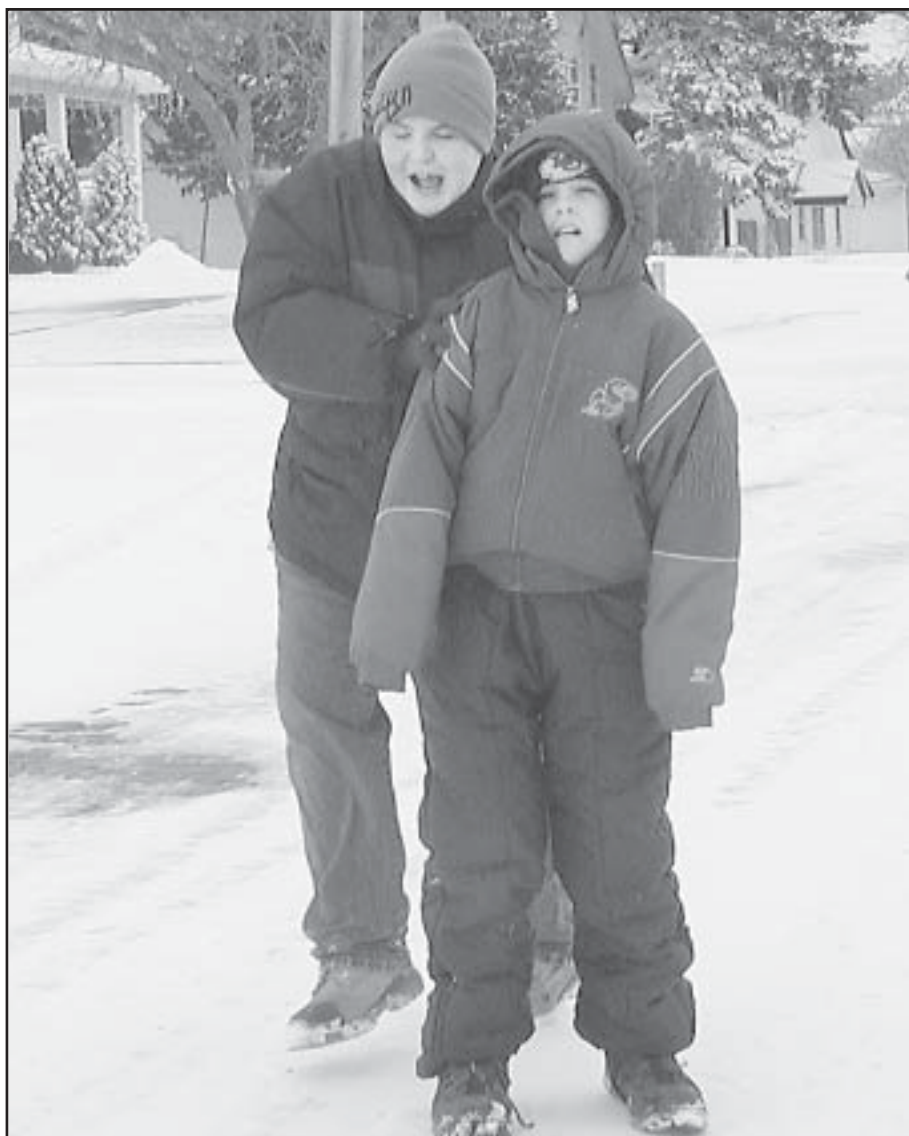
Tuesday	High 34, Low 17
Wednesday	High 40, Low 23
Thursday	High 27, Low 24
Week ago	High 44, Low 18
Month ago	High 65, Low 40
Year ago	High 55, Low 28
December precipitation	1/2 inches
Year-to-date precipitation	19.33 inches

(Readings taken at the Paul and Pat Howell farm 10 Miles North and 1/3 Mile East of Norton)

Prayer

Almighty God, we rejoice and thank you for Jesus Christ. Please help us to be used as a gracious gift of yours for your glory, we pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow



Not a lot of youngsters were out playing in the snow Tuesday afternoon, but Robert Derauf and Kaenon Keiswetter (above) both took advantage of the snow day free from school to slide down the icy streets. Ben Rojas (below) also took advantage of the powder by snow-boarding down a hill in Elmwood Park.

— Telegram photos by Veronica Monier



Snow closes schools, cheers wheat growers

More white stuff would be appreciated as first winter storm blankets the area

By KRISTEN BRANDS and CYNTHIA HAYNES

The snow storm that moved in late Monday evening left many people stranded at home and caused closings for schools and some businesses but made farmers and ranchers happy.

"This latest snowfall was a nice, wet snow," said National Weather Service Forecaster/Meteorologist Mike Lammers in Goodland. "As many know the wheat crops were in dire need of some precipitation."

He said that the snowfall was heaviest south of the Norton area, saying that Colby received close to five inches of snow. He reported that Norton's snowfall measured in at four inches.

The 2003 season's snowfall is 5.7 inches as of today in Goodland, Mr. Lammers said. "Other communities around, should not be that far off that measurement," he said. "Compare this year's figure to the 2002 season's snowfall which was at 2.5 inches."

The snow welcomed by area farmers and ranchers, Norton County Extension Agent Keith Van Skike said.

"Right now, anything we get is great," he said.

The area has been dry for the last two years. A year ago Norton County was 71 percent below the 30-year average for moisture. This year the county was 23 percent below the average in mid-November.

However, Mr. Van Skike said the problem is compounded, by not only how much moisture the area gets but by when it arrives.

For pastures to regenerate and wheat to germinate, water is needed in the fall and we didn't get any then.

The wheat, which has gone dormant due to the cold, will be helped by the snow, he said. Even though less than 20 percent of the wheat is above ground right now, the dormant seeds can use the moisture when it warms up and they have a chance to sprout, he said.

The wheat has to have a period of about six weeks of temperatures below 40 degrees in order to head out. If that cold temperature isn't present, the wheat will sprout and come up but it won't produce the grain.

Even though most of the wheat crops haven't sprouted, the cold weather we have been having will help them, he said. And the snow will help insulate the ground from drying out, if it stays on the field and doesn't blow into the ditches.

The pastures are a different story, however. In order to store energy, the pasture grasses needed moisture in the fall. While the snow will not hurt the pastures, it won't help them as much as it will the wheat, he said.

"The critical time for pastures was the fall and they didn't get to store up much energy," Mr. Van Skike said.

The area usually gets between .3 and .4 inches of moisture each month from December through February. The greatest time for moisture in Northwest Kansas, however, is from March through June, he said.

But, every bit helps, he added.

The weather bureau reports that a new storm system could bring more snow next week, which will make everyone happy.

City asks that donor not place crosses on graves

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

What seemed like a great idea for beautifying the cemetery and honoring the dead got reluctantly shot down at last Tuesday's Norton City Council meeting.

City Councilwoman Elaine Mann said that the Parks Committee wants to mark graves in what is known as The Potters Field, an area where there are no markers on the plots.

No one knows who is buried in most of them, she said. In many cases the old records say "a negro" or "a Mexican,"

which isn't much help.

Mrs. Mann said that she has been offered free crosses to mark these graves.

She said that granite markers might be found. "Give them a name and recognition," she said.

Councilwoman Harriett Gill was obviously reluctant to disagree but she did so.

"In this day and age, will we get into any trouble putting crosses on graves?" she asked.

"I even hate to say something like that," she said of her doubts.

Mrs. Mann pointed out that, while the graves are on city property, the crosses would not be purchased with city money. "The crosses have been donated," she said.

"It's not illegal is it?" she asked City Attorney Karen Griffiths.

"No, but . . ." Mrs. Griffiths said. "I think it would be better to use another symbol. I'm sorry."

Mrs. Mann said that she would see if the crosses had been ordered yet and see if they can be changed to plain markers.

In other business, the council:

- Talked to race promoter Paula Bolt about collecting a head tax in both the grandstands and the pits. While a tax has been collected on visitors to the grandstand, none has been collected on those in the pits. City ordinance requires a tax be collected on both.

Mrs. Bolt was asked to attend a Parks Committee meeting to discuss the problem after Mrs. Bolt said that she and her husband lost \$15,000 on the races last year. (Continued on Page 5)

Cold weather slows progress of bridge work

By KRISTEN BRANDS

Progress on the viaduct bridge east of Norton is being made, but as long as the weather remains cold, construction will be slow.

According to Kansas Department of Transportation Area Engineer Harold Schleicher, whose office oversees the bridge project, the first concrete pour of the bridge deck was made on Monday.

Mr. Schleicher reported that the first one-fourth pouring of the seven-inch deck was a success before the cold weather came to town.

Three more concrete pourings will have to occur in order to complete the 693 feet of bridge deck. Tom Hein, Department of

Transportation public involvement liaison, said that in order to do the pourings, temperatures have to be above 20 degrees and rising.

"After a pouring is completed, the concrete must have a 14-day cure time," he explained. "During this cure time, the roadway is covered with tarps and heated with propane 24 hours a day."

It all depends on the weather, Schleicher said. "If this was summer, we'd be moving right along, but due to the cold temperatures it does slow things down considerably on this project."

Schleicher predicts that the final silica-fume pouring will occur sometime in (Continued on Page 5)

Norton County wants city to pay more for dispatching

By VERONICA MONIER

The city and county of Norton are going to have to negotiate a new contract if the city wants to retain the use of the county's dispatch service.

Sheriff Troy Thomson sent a letter to the city last week saying that the county was ending the city's contract for dispatch services as of the end of next year.

The contract in place now, which was signed in 1998, says that the City of Norton will pay 40 percent of the dispatch salaries, benefits and health insurance, but has a cap at \$44,000. For the past several years, the city's been paying more than the \$44,000.

This year, the discrepancy was noticed and the city quit paying after the \$44,000 was paid.

Sheriff Troy Thomson, who was appointed lead negotiator by the Norton County Commissioners, said the letter of termination was sent to get things moving, because nothing was happening regarding the contract. He said the city has a year before the termination can be enacted, and hopefully, they can work something out before then.

He said the main problem is health insurance costs have gone up. (Continued on Page 5)

Cultural sensitivity ends idea for making graves

(Continued from Page 1)

year.

- Approved a beer license for T.J.'s Bar and T.J.'s Steakhouse, 402 S. State for Tammy Danner and Jana Keiswetter.
- "We're waiting a little longer to open the steakhouse because we want everything to be right," Ms. Danner told the board.
- Ms. Keiswetter said that they would be getting a liquor license later.
- Authorized the closing of Main Street from State Street between Russ' Jewelry and the First State Bank on the north and Moffet Drug on the south from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, for *The Norton Telegram's* Christmas on Us pro-

motion drawing.

- Decided to change the regular time for council meetings from 7:30 p.m. the first and third Tuesday of each month to 5:30 p.m. the first and third Wednesday.
- At the request of Councilman Ron Briery the ordinance on changing the meetings will not be published until after Dec. 17 so that the first Wednesday meeting will not be until Jan. 7.
- Meter reader Jim Miller has been named employee of the month for December.
- Were told that the city Christmas party will be held at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 9, in the basement of Prairieland Electric. Councilman Jerry Hawks said that he was

against having the party because it is a bad use of public money.

- Learned that construction of the new dog pound is moving along and that it should have heat soon.
- Heard that the Season's Greetings banner, which was not put up last year due to road construction, will be put up this year.
- Received a letter from the sheriff notifying the city that he was canceling the city's contract on dispatch and jail services as of Dec. 1, 2004.
- Heard that the Public Safety Committee wants to reword the dangerous animal ordinance.
- Tabled a resolution to raise cable television rates.



Richard Martin, Norton, is president of the Norton Golden Glow Club. He was checking out some of the gifts (above) Monday night at the club's annual Christmas party. He and Frosty kept a close eye on the presents and made sure everyone had a gift to take home. Eight residents of the Andbe Home joined the group for a potluck supper (below) and provided the entertainment. The Andbe Home group led the audience in a group participation number called, "Donner Is Sleeping". Santa Claus, disguised as Duane McEwen, made an appearance and presented a skit entitled, "Santa and the Christ Child". To wrap up the entertainment, the Andbe Home residents performed "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas".

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts



Norton students doing well on national standardized tests

By VERONICA MONIER

School Counselor Bruce Poage gave the Norton School Board an update on the results of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills at Monday night's meeting.

Mr. Poage said the tests aren't required, but are given for three reasons.

First, it gives the teachers and other faculty members a broader picture of how the students are doing, because it is a national test rather than a state test.

Second, because it's given every year to a certain grade level, the school faculty can track the students' progress from year to year.

Third, it helps with the school improvement plan as it gives another source of data.

rather than giving out the paper and pencil tests. He said the students did equally well both ways.

In other business, the board:

- Appointed board members Anna Foley and Jennifer Terrell as its negotiating team for teaching contracts.
- Heard from Superintendent Greg Mann that the school will be hosting the Regional Wrestling Tournament on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 20-21. Mr. Mann said the tournament will begin at 2 p.m. on Feb. 20. Because of the large number of people and vehicles expected — 16 schools will be participating — the high school and junior high will be dismissed at 1 p.m. that day.
- Was given an update from Mrs. Terrell on the Kansas Association of School Boards convention, which was in Topeka on Dec. 5-7. Mrs. Terrell said that the two hot topics at the convention were non-resident enrollment and school district consolidation. She said listening to the problems other districts had made her realize how good Norton is.
- Heard from Mr. Mann that the new computers approved at the November meeting have arrived. Mr. Mann said the transition and shuffling of computers at Eisenhower Elementary is about

one-half finished, while the new mobile lab at the high school/junior high is ready to use.

- Heard from Mr. Mann that the personnel documents from the Kansas State Department of Education were reviewed. He said all district classes and courses are taught by certified teachers, and over 98 percent of all classes and courses are taught by instructors who meet the new federal definition of highly qualified. These percentages are above the state averages, which in turn are above the national averages.
- Was told by Mr. Mann that the district's new bus will be returning to Master's Transportation in Kearney on Monday and will be there through the Christmas break, to have previously agreed-upon work finished. Mr. Mann said they have been happy with it.
- Instructed Mr. Mann to contact the Kansas Association of School Boards asking for help to establish general district goals. The board could use those goals in the evaluation of the superintendent.
- Heard from Mr. Mann that repairs to the wall-sign at the high school have been completed and the bills have been sent to the insurance company for reimbursement.

He said the students scores are good, but told the board to keep in mind that one student or even three or four students can skew a class' score dramatically. The scores are also affected by test weariness and the mechanics of taking the tests.

"The more tests the students do, the harder it is to get them excited about doing their best," he said. "We spend a lot of time on these group tests. If not actually taking them, then getting ready to take them."

Mr. Poage said they were beginning to integrate on-line tests,

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County, city spar over dispatch services

(Continued from Page 1)

"We're dealing with the same problem that the city's dealing with," he said. "Rising health insurance costs."

He said the dispatchers don't make a lot of money and the county gives them good benefits as an incentive.

Salaries also have gone up since the contract was signed five years ago, Sheriff Thomson said. At one time the county was having trouble hiring dispatchers because the pay was so low.

Commission Chairman John Miller remembered the time when the only applicant for the job was a convicted felon.

Despite the letter, Sheriff Thomson said, the county wants to keep its contract with the city.

"We don't want to give the impression that the county wants to

split with the city on this," he said. "It wouldn't be good for the county or for the city."

Representatives from both have met several times in an attempt to get things straightened out.

A draft of a new contract is to be drawn up, so that negotiations can begin.

Sheriff, commissioners discuss dispatch services

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Sheriff Troy Thomson can catch criminals and evildoers but he needed help Monday to explain why the costs of dispatching has gone up over the last five years.

Sheriff Thomson came to the Norton County commissioners meeting on Monday with his figures asking for suggestions on how to explain to the City of Norton why its bill for dispatch services has gone up over the last several years.

The problem, he said, is wages and insurance. Both have risen dramatically over the last few years and, in order to keep his people, the sheriff has had to raise the pay rate of his help — both deputies and dispatchers.

Health insurance and benefits have skyrocketed, he said.

All these things have to be paid for and it is important to have well-trained help in the dispatch office.

When an emergency arrives the dispatchers have to be calm and effective. Commission Chairman John Miller agreed. He noted that last month when there was a big car chase going on U.S. 36, the dispatchers had to be talking to several agencies and patrol cars and writing down everything everyone said.

"I would rather be out in the field as a deputy than doing their job,"

he said.

He advised the sheriff to write up his notes on cost increases on a single sheet so that it would be easy to follow when he presented his case to the city's finance committee.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Gave Emergency Medical Technician Andy Neilsen authority to get bids to buy several pagers for those without them and purchase a jump kit for a technician, who normally gets to the scene before the ambulance arrives.
- Received a thank you from Cynthia Schemper for allowing her to take the emergency medical technicians class. She will be helping with the bookwork for the ambulance service. She also suggested the service needs more continuing education classes to keep the technicians sharp and their certificates in date.
- Told Lenora school district bus driver Ernest Long that he should get together with Norton County Road and Bridge Supervisor Tom Brannan to get some gravel put on the hills west of Lenora.
- Were told there was supposed to be an inspection at the old landfill on **Wednesday** to check for cracks. The snowstorm that is expected to hit Eastern Kansas has

caused the inspection to be put off.

- Learned that most of the questions raised about the county's landfill application have been answered with the help of Pat Cox of BG Consultants.
- Heard from Mr. Brannan that he is still looking for a good, used Mack truck, that his people are doing road work and that a tarp has been put on a third trailer to haul sand.
- Passed a resolution to take the sheriff's department out of the direct health care provider status on the county's insurance due to federal regulations regarding privacy of health information.
- Learned from County Health Nurse Gina Frack that she is trying to make sure all her people get their comp time and vacations taken by the end of the year. She was reminded that employees

have to take their vacation time before the end of the year or lose it.

- Heard that the health department has billing problems with state Medicaid. The rules on home health have changed, there is no manual and it is getting hard to get paid from the state, Ms. Frack said.
- Received a visit and Christmas cheese and sausage gift packages from a representative of Penco Engineering. Mr. Miller gave his to the clerk's office staff.
- Reviewed bids to repair the Lenora ambulance, which struck a deer on Dec. 1. The commissioners accepted a bid from Gall Motors of Norton for \$1,237.85 for the repairs.
- Talked to Treasurer Cynthia Linner on how to handle outstanding checks. Ms. Linner will reissue checks and get the books cleaned up for the end of the year.

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Viaduct work slowed by cold

(Continued from Page 1)

April when the weather warms up. During the final pouring, the overnight temperature has to be above 35 degrees for a week.

Other work after the bridge deck is complete includes laying asphalt and concrete bridge approaches, installing guard rails

and seeding. Mr. Schleicher gives a tentative completion date of July 1 for the entire project.

Capital Contractors of Lincoln, Neb., is the main contractor in charge of the \$5.7 million viaduct project. The new bridge will be wider, including 24 feet of driving lanes and 16 feet of shoulders.

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Sammy's Missing—

PLEASE HELP FIND HIM
 He's a chihuahua, white with brown spots, was wearing a red collar with green ID tag. He's very friendly and we all miss him—even his friend the cat. Call 871-1765, work 877-3351 ask for Ed or 877-5851 ask for Tanya. Last seen by NCHS Tech Bldg. Please call us with ANY information. Home 874-4014.

Reward Offered