

Store to close in September

By Tom Betz

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Employees at Goodland's J.C. Penney's were told 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.

Ms. 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 Ms. 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 Ms. Madden would be in the Goodland store in the afternoon.

Ms. 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.

Ms. 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 Ms. Gresty has been with the store for over 15 years and Ms. 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."

Ms. 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," Ms. 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 jccpcorpcomm@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," Mr. 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.



YOUNG MISS CONTESTANTS — Jami Pevler, left, earned the Presentation of Individual Interview Award and Courtney Douthit received the Presentation of Performing Arts Award.

JUDGE

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each case and the competence to make decisions based on an analysis of the law and the facts.

He has handled legal matters such as real estate law, income tax preparation, farm leases, commercial leases, contract law, entity formation, estate planning, probate, child custody and domestic matters. He also served as Cheyenne County Attorney for four years and was a law clerk for the District Court Judges of the 3rd District.

"I have handled legal matters for clients in numerous areas of the law and worked with people in various life situations," he said.

Mr. Berens pointed out there are three branches of government: The Legislative, the Executive and the Judicial branch.

"Each branch has its own duties and responsibilities," he said.

A district judge, he said, should follow the laws as enacted and the decisions of higher courts.

"If a judge disagrees with a law, then the judge should encourage change through the legislative process rather than changing the law from the bench," he said.

As a district judge, I will not legislate from the bench. I will fairly and impartially apply the laws to the facts of a case in reaching a decision. I will protect the rights of the people as provided by the law and will insure the rights of the people to seek a remedy through the courts.

"As district judge, when necessary, people will have their day in court in a timely manner. While I support alternative dispute resolution, if the parties are unable to resolve their differences, I will be objective and impartial in deciding the matter at a trial."

Mr. Berens is a member of the American, Kansas and Colorado Bar Associations and American and Kansas Associations for Justice.

He is a member of the First Baptist Church in St. Francis and is licensed to preach. He is a former director and former president of the Cheyenne County Economic Development Corporation.

While in law school, he served as a representative of the Student Bar Association and as appointed Lt. Governor of Community Service/Work-A-Day program for the 10th Circuit Law Student Division of the American Bar Association.

He was raised in Colby and graduated from Colby High School and attended Colby Community College. He went on to earn a bachelor's in business administration at Fort Hays State University. He graduated from Washburn University School of Law with honors (cum laude) and in the top 15 percent of his class.

He and his wife, Angie, have two sons, Matthew and Joshua. His spare time is spent with his family.

BUILDING

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It was suggested that, when traveling physicians are doing procedures, the administrator might have a "dedicated" aide to keep track of patients.

Kari Gilliland, board member, said the board has added a new physician and two new physician's assistants. It is necessary to cover that "gap" before doing more work on the hospital, she said. However, she added that the addition is in the strategic plan.

Mrs. Zweggardt said that she didn't expect the board to break ground tomorrow but felt that the board needed to be looking forward.

"I would like to see an addition of an outpatient area to include a procedure room that could also be used for pain management," she said. "When traveling physicians come, to make it financially feasible for them and the hospital, it is necessary to accommodate a greater number of patients. If we are unable to do this, it may be an incentive for them to take patients elsewhere."

"It is really a need," she said.

LOAD

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first load of wheat several times in the past 10 years. When asked, he said his land was not sandy but good farm ground. The wheat was cut on a field 3 miles south of Wheeler, just north of his house.

Mr. Neitzel said he has been helping with harvest as long as he could remember. He bought the family farm when his father died in 1966.

Shortly after Mr. Neitzel brought in his load, Samantha Zweggardt brought in a load of wheat to the St. Francis Equity. The wheat had been cut southwest of St. Francis on land belonging to Isernhagen LLC and farmed by Roger Zweggardt.

The winners will need to pick up their scrip money at *The Herald* office and will be able to spend it in the following participating businesses: Pizza Hunt, St. Francis Equity, St. Francis Super's, Hilltop General Store, and *The Saint Francis Herald*.

Harvey Neitzel brought the first load to the Wheeler Elevator at 3:40 p.m. on Wednesday. The test weight was 59.6 pounds and moisture was 13.9 percent.

Mr. Neitzel has brought in the

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