

weather report

53°
at noon

Today

• Sunset, 4:30 p.m.

Tomorrow

• Sunrise, 7:06 a.m.

• Sunset, 4:31 p.m.

Midday Conditions

• Soil Temperature 30 degrees

• Humidity 33 percent

• Sky mostly sunny

• Winds north 15 mph

• Barometer 30.10 inches and falling

• Record High 74° (1980)

• Record Low -8° (1924)

Last 24 Hours*

High 39°

Low 13°

Precipitation none

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Cloudy, low 20-25, north-west wind 10-20 mph. Tomorrow: Cloudy, high 40, low 20, northwest wind 20-30.

Extended Forecast

Friday: dry, high 40, low 15-20. Saturday: chance of snow late, high mid 30s, low 10-15. Sunday: chance of snow early, high 30-35, low 15.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.

* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

Wheat — \$2.84 bushel

Posted county price — \$2.72

Loan deficiency payment — 0¢

Corn — \$2.03 bushel

Posted county price — \$1.97

Loan deficiency pmt. — 2¢

Milo — \$3.25 hundredweight

Soybeans — \$4.39 bushel

Posted county price — \$4.43

Loan deficiency payment — 47¢

Millet — \$9 hundredweight

Sunflowers

Oil current crop — \$5.80 cwt.

Loan deficiency pmt. — \$3.83

Confection current — \$15/\$7 cwt.

Pinto beans — \$15

(Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Frontier Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press

1 p.m.

Unemployed rate increases

TOPEKA — The state’s economy continued to perform as expected in November.

The unemployment rate increased slightly, to 3.5 percent, the Department of Human Resources reported Tuesday. The rate for October was 3.4 percent.

Hiring by retail stores increased, as merchants prepared for the holiday shopping season. However, the department noted that some seasonal jobs, such as construction, ended.

Bill Layes, the department’s chief of labor market information services, said unemployment has increased slightly from October to November during six of the past 10 years.

“It’s much the same as we expect every year,” Layes said. “We would expect this kind of increase.”



John Bateman, a partner in J-D Stonecutters of Goodland, sandblasts a piece of limestone outside his funeral home in Goodland.
Photos by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

Stonecutters find success

Duo finds there’s a market beyond tombstone lettering

By Janet Craft
The Goodland Daily News

J-D Stonecutters is the name of the Goodland business which creates stone signs. The “J” is for John Bateman and the “D” is for Diann Ross. The two started their business a year ago.

It’s grown since then. This month, Ross said, they had three weeks to complete 84 orders for Christmas gifts.

Bateman said he had no idea the business would turn into what it has. “Especially to do that many in that short of time before Christmas,” he said.

Ross said they worked until 10 p.m. each day for the two weeks before Christmas to finish up their orders.

Bateman and his wife Judy own Bateman Funeral Home in Goodland. Ross works for the Batemans.

Ross said Mr. Bateman asked her if she would be interested in doing stone work. He has been in the funeral business for many years and has experience in doing lettering on monuments for close to 10 years. The signs are a step beyond tombstones, though.

“It has turned out to be really interesting,” Ross said, “because you never know what people are going to want.”

Bateman said they will try to do whatever design people want on the stones.

On big stones, people usually have their name and some kind of design put on, he said. On the smaller ones, they usually don’t have a name put on,



Diann Ross marks the position for a design to be put on a piece of limestone in the workroom at Bateman Funeral Home.

just some kind of design. Most of the time, the big stones have fossils in them, Bateman said, and they try to leave those.

If the people buying the rock want a smooth surface, then Bateman

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Holiday sales up and down

Merchants say weather hurt

By Dana Sulsberger
The Goodland Daily News

Merchants in Goodland seemed to agree that this year’s holiday shopping season was a little slower than usual and many blamed the poor weather for the slower days.

While a few merchants said the season was a little up, a lot said it was a little down, few said that they were disappointed with the sales.

Many hadn’t had much of a chance to go over the numbers yet, but could compare it in general with other years.

“It was a lot slower this year,” said Juanita Watlan, a partner with B-E’s Jewelry, “and I think a lot of the downtown businesses would agree.”

Wal-Mart’s sales were also a little down for the year, said manager Scott Schroller, but, he said, it was a good year all the same, just down a little in the numbers.

Other merchants said sales were slightly up or had stayed about the same, including Elliott’s Inc., Aten Department Store, Miller’s Electronics and Jan’s Hallmark.

Wayne Aten, co-owner of Aten’s, said he thought sales were up slightly from the previous years and he thought the holiday shopping season had gone well.

At Miller’s, the sales were up at some points and down at others, said owner Chuck Bohma.

Sales at Jan’s Hallmark were pretty good, said owner Jan Malpert, who added that customers kept her busy all season, especially on Tuesday — the day after Christmas.

“Over all it was a pretty good season,” she said, despite some slower days.

Mike Elliott, owner of Elliott’s Inc., said he wasn’t disappointed with this

year’s sales.

“It was a good Christmas,” he said. Despite the good sales this season — which hadn’t changed much from the last couple of years — he had noticed a change over the past 15 to 20 years.

“Years ago, people used to buy smaller gifts,” he said. “This year we noticed a lot of people buying larger items like recliners and couches.”

It was hard to tell whether the larger items were Christmas gifts, he said, because not many people would ask for something that large to be gift wrapped.

The store also did a lot of business with people from out of town, he said, and they had delivered all over western Kansas and eastern Colorado.

Elliott said some of the slower days could be blamed on the poor weather, especially the windy, freezing days last week.

“It is hard to tell if the weather was just a contributing factor,” he said, “or the only factor in the drop in sales.”

Schroller, the Wal-Mart manager, agreed that weather always plays a factor in the sales.

Bohma, at Miller’s, agreed that the cold weather didn’t help his sales any, especially with furniture sales. But, he said, the slower business might also be because of low farm prices and the drought this season. It was difficult for him to say what might have contributed to it.

The business at Hallmark also slowed down with the bad weather, Malpert said, but it managed to average out in the end.

“The days that were busy varied,” she said. “When the weather was good, there were lots of people, but even when the weather was bad, we had quite a few.”

City may reword old trash contract

The Goodland City Commission will hold a special meeting on Thursday to talk about Wal-Mart’s trash removal and a contract with the man who has been hauling trash since the store was built.

Commissioners will meet at noon to decide if they want to renew the contract or reword it.

Scott Schroller, Wal-Mart manager, appeared before the commission Dec. 18 to protest the \$450 a month he has to pay to Kevin Butts, who hauls his trash, as a fee to the city.

The money is then turned over to the city for letting Butts pick up the trash.

Butts has been collecting the trash since Wal-Mart was being built in 1997, said City Manager Ron Pickman, because the city couldn’t handle the

amount of wood and metal that the store was producing.

The Wal-Mart manager said he would consider not renewing the contract with Butts if he could find a cheaper service with the city or with anyone else.

The commission didn’t want to renew the city’s contract with Butts if Schroller decided not to renew his contract.

Butts would still have to pay the fee to the city even though he wasn’t picking up the trash because of the wording of the contract.

Pickman said the commission would decide whether to renew the contract or reword it.

Butts has been invited to the meeting but he wasn’t sure if he would come.

Oil recovers, aviation booms as farmers struggle in market

By Roxana Hegeman
Associated Press Writer

WICHITA — Bolstered by a federal farm bailout, the state’s rural economy still faces an uncertain future as farmers continue to struggle with unrelenting low market prices in the aftermath of a drought.

Meanwhile, independent oil producers — spurred by an upturn in oil and gas prices — scramble to resume production in an industry decimated in

Kansas by the last bust.

In Wichita, where aviation is the bedrock of a strong employment outlook, manufacturers were adding jobs and scrambling to find enough workers to fill them. Even Boeing Wichita, which last fall began rehiring laid-off workers, now expects to add between 600 and 1,000 jobs to the payroll next year.

Elsewhere in corporate Kansas, the year saw two major merger plans dissolve.

Western Resources Inc.’s proposed acquisition of Kansas City Power & Light Co. was derailed when the Missouri company backed out on Jan. 2 — and by November, Topeka-based Western had found a buyer for the electricity subsidiaries that make up its core business.

Sprint Corp. sailed into 2000 expecting that its \$129 billion merger with WorldCom would be near completion by the year’s end. But the two telecom-

munications companies canceled the deal in July under extreme opposition from regulators in the United States and Europe.

Out in farm country, the 2001 winter wheat crop is now in the ground as farmers tally up their losses from this season’s disappointing harvests amid low crop prices.

“Most farm families are kind of feeling like they are treading water this year,” said farm analyst Duane Hund of

Kansas State University. “Government payments are going to be the bulk of the net income for grain producers this year — there is no question about that.”

Government disaster payments will be allocated beginning in January, he said.

Meanwhile, prospects for the state’s livestock sector have improved along with consumer demand for more beef.

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