

# Top 10 stories tell tale of important happenings

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nical programs.

If college status is granted, students will be able to earn Associate of Applied Science degrees in the 13 programs, ranging from medical assistant to truck and tractor diesel mechanic. Now, graduates get a diploma and a "credential" showing courses they've completed and their grades.

Students can go on to earn an associate's degree from Colby Community College, but the change means that the technical school — which has a waiting list bearing the names of hundreds of students — will be the one awarding the degrees.

Larry Keirns, the technical school's director, said 94 of 279 students who graduated in 2000 went on to get degrees from Colby. He said he hopes to increase that to at least half of each year's graduating class.

The director said the change will help the students and the school earn some respect.

"People respect the name 'college' more than the name 'school,'" Keirns said. "It carries a little more respect, a little higher standards."

## WRITE-IN WINS ELECTION

**3** A write-in candidate won a contested race in Sherman County in November's general election — something no one can remember happening before.

Mitch Tiede, a Democrat, ousted the commissioner in District 2, Kenny Davis, earning 61 percent of the votes and surprising many courthouse observers.

The race sprang up in the wake of the commissioners' unpopular decision last year to rip out the pavement on the Nemechek Road north of town. Observers said controversy surrounding that decision was the main issue in the election.

Commissioner Davis resigned the morning after the Nov. 7 election, saying he wanted to let Tiede take the reigns right away. Getting Tiede into office wasn't that easy, though.

The 50-year-old had to wait three weeks to be sworn in because the Sherman County Democratic Party had never organized. Democrats first had to elect a county chairman to call a vacancy committee together. Once the three-person party committee elected officers, however, it nominated Tiede and Gov. Bill Graves approved the appointment on Nov. 30.

## AIRLINE SERVICE ENDS

**4** Great Lakes Aviation stopped running commercial flights from Goodland in April because a government subsidy program — which helps rural airports keep flights to major hubs — cut what it pays per passenger and said Goodland no longer qualified be-

cause it is too close to Denver International Airport.

Great Lakes, based in Wyoming, received \$400 per passenger from the Essential Air Service program — \$200 more than the program's limit — but claimed it couldn't afford to keep flights in Goodland without being paid at least \$700 per passenger.

The U.S. Department of Transportation, which runs the program, refused to pay more and allowed Great Lakes to drop Goodland because the city is less than 210 miles from a big airport — Denver International.

At that time, City Manager Ron Pickman called air service "essential," and he and Ron Harding, Chamber of Commerce executive director, started looking for a replacement.

Mike Skyler, owner of SkyCo and a former state trooper here, began working to establish his own airline service at Renner Field this summer.

Pickman, Skyler and city officials traveled to Washington in September to talk with Transportation Department officials and congressmen about air service. Pickman said they were told there is a slim chance Goodland will be reinstated into the subsidy program.

The best way for Goodland to get air service, he said, is for Skyler to start his service and prove to the department that the service is important and is used. He added that Goodland might be able to benefit from new government assistance programs for rural airports.

In December, Skyler approached the Goodland Regional Medical Center board about buying both the airplane used to fly doctors in from Denver and the hospital's Federal Aviation Administration certificate.

He said if the hospital approved, he could have an air ambulance service up and running within three months. Otherwise, Skyler said, it will take four to six months.

The board put off a decision, saying there are at least two air ambulance companies that are considering basing an airplane or helicopter in Goodland. The board will meet again in January.

## LEUKEMIA TAKES COMMISSIONER

**5** Sherman County Commissioner Gary Townsend, 54, lost his four-year battle against leukemia on Aug. 10, dying in a Denver hospital where he was recuperating after a bone marrow transplant.

Commissioner Townsend, a farmer who lived his whole life in Sherman County, had first been treated for severe aplastic anemia in 1996 — the first year of his first term in office.

He had received the bone marrow transplant in early June at Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center in Denver and had been a patient there most of the time since.



The completion of the Max Jones expansion was the sixth story of 2000. Mike Stroyek put a finishing coat of varnish on the new gym floor at the end of February and the school district held an open house in March.

Photo By Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

Townsend, who graduated in 1964 from Goodland High School, had a diploma from the Northwest Kansas Technical School. The Republican was unopposed for re-election in November.

A Goodland business owner replaced Townsend on the commission a month after his death.

With the toss of a coin, the Sherman County Republican Party Committee decided to nominate Kevin Rasure, owner of Rasure Lumber Do-It Center, to fill the position on Sept. 12. Barb Eisenbart also wanted the job, but committee members flipped a coin after several tie votes.

## MAX JONES ADDITION

**6** The Goodland School Board had record attendance at its first meeting in April, as over 100 people came to take a peek at the new Max Jones Fieldhouse addition.

Before the session, the group toured the new junior high gym and locker rooms in the addition. The open house marked the completion of a \$1.7 million expansion that took about two years to build.

The school district paid for the addition with a \$1 million loan from First

National Bank in Goodland and money from its capital improvements budget. The board approved making the last \$132,000 quarterly payment to the bank in December.

The school board and members of a recently formed building committee are now discussing an addition on the east side of the high school to accommodate new science classrooms and possibly the junior high in the future.

## HERO SAVES WOMAN

**7** Dan Knitig was driving down a county road to a friend's house one night in October when he saw flames leap from a wrecked car and pulled over to check it out.

Knitig, a sales representative at Elliott's, said he saw that a woman was trapped in the burning car — laying at the intersection of County Road 67 and 19 — and his instinct told him to move fast.

The 29-year-old struggled to free Bonnie Thompson from the car, as her foot was caught behind the gas pedal. Knitig said he could tell Thompson's leg was broken by the angle at which it was turned and because she was in tremendous pain.

His actions later earned him a Civil-

ian Service Award from Sheriff Doug Whitson, who presented it to him at a short ceremony in December. Thompson, who suffered a broken thigh bone, left heel and clavicle, came in a wheelchair to thank Knitig.

Whitson said Knitig's actions, putting his own life in danger to save another's, demanded the award.

The sheriff said Thompson, 52, was driving east when she clipped the back of a former high classmate's truck, which was headed north. It was driven by Larry Gutsch, 52, who helped Knitig pull Thompson from the car and later went back to retrieve her purse.

Gutsch received head injuries and was released from the Goodland Regional Medical Center a few days after the accident.

## DAILY AND STAR MERGE

**8** Goodland's two newspapers merged in late September, ending more than six years of competition.

The Sherman County Star, a weekly founded in 1994 by Eric and Roxie Yonkey, announced in the Sept. 27 edition that the paper would be no longer. Haynes Publishing Co., which runs The Goodland Daily News, agreed to buy the assets of The Star and hired much of the paper's staff.

Steve Haynes, president of Haynes Publishing, said the merger came at the end of a tough time for both papers.

"As we saw in Denver," he said, "newspapers in competitive towns seldom are profitable. We hope, with the merger, to create one strong voice and advertising medium for Goodland and Sherman County."

Roxie Yonkey said in her column, Star Tracks — which now appears in The Daily — that the weekly paper had never made money. Haynes said it was the same for his newspaper in recent years. He said that the closing in 1999 of the two largest advertisers in town, Gibsons Discount Store and Jubilee Foods, caused more of a strain.

"We want to build the very best newspaper," Haynes said, "the strongest product that we can to serve this community."

Eric Yonkey agreed to join The Daily's advertising staff, while Roxie Yonkey now covers sports part-time. The Daily has continued The Star's social columns covering Brewster and Goodland and has hired Pat Schiefen, a former Star employee, as a book-keeper.

Haynes said since the merger, the paper's circulation has increased by 800 and the financial situation is looking up.

## SENATOR KEEPS JOB

**9** Sen. Stan Clark overcame a tide of cash and criticism in August's primary election, when he soundly defeated a challenger whose big-bucks campaign was backed by major statewide groups.

As the Republican results rolled in, it was clear the Oakley photographer was indeed the winner — earning 66 percent of the votes in the end against Steve Mangan, a Tribune farmer who was supported by the Kansas Livestock Association, the state's largest teachers' union and powerful moderate Republicans.

The race for the 40th District seat in the Kansas Senate — which covers 15 northwest Kansas counties — was a tough one from the beginning, but got even tougher as election day neared.

With heavy financial support, Mangan spent thousands on television, radio and newspaper advertising, plus yard signs and fliers mailed to voters' homes.

Thousands more in "soft" money was spent by groups supporting him, including the Livestock Association and the Kansas-National Education Association, which paid for fliers attacking Clark's voting record.

The senator, who has held the office for six years, said he spent thousands rebutting what he called false claims in some of the advertisements and mailings. In the end, campaign finance records showed Clark spent much less than Mangan, a former livestock association president.

Sen. Clark snatched two thirds of the votes after having spent \$30,000 on his campaign. Mangan had spent over \$54,000 by October, with \$64,000 in his war chest.

Sen. Clark easily defeated Quinter Democrat Billie Flora in the November general election, earning 83 percent of the votes over the 79-year-old retired farmer.

He was recently named chairman of the Senate Utilities Committee, a position that will keep him in the public eye and show critics that he's got a future in the Kansas Legislature.

## COUNTY CREATES JOB

**10** The Sherman County Commission ers created a new job in October to keep up with a county government that is growing more complex and harder to manage every year.

After weeks of talking about it, Chuck Frankenfeld, acting chairman, brought a description for a county administrator job to a September meeting, along with proposed qualifications requiring a degree in public administration and five years' experience.

The resolution the commissioners passed establishing the job said the scope and complexity of county government has increased to the point that there is a need for someone with technical competence to manage day-to-day services.

Commissioner Kenny Davis, who later resigned after losing the general election to a write-in candidate, said the position, including a secretary and office remodeling, will cost about \$85,000 a year. He said the new administrator will receive an annual salary of about \$50,000.

The commissioners turned to the Kansas Association of Counties for hiring help, and Randy Allen, executive director, placed advertisements, accepted resumes and recommended applicants.

Eleven people from Kansas and other states applied and the commissioners narrowed it down to three finalists, including one Goodland man, who will interview with the commission and Allen on Wednesday.

# Less hours for workers

WICHITA (AP) — Blue-collar workers aren't getting as many hours or as much pay as they did a year ago, a new statewide study shows.

According to statistics from the Kansas Department of Human Services, full-time manufacturing workers clocked about 41.5 hours a week in November 1999, compared to 40.5 in November 2000 — the latest numbers available. The statewide average weekly wage, including overtime, was \$620.84 in November 1999, compared with \$611.15 in 2000.

Experts say the difference is related to the number of people working in manufacturing jobs. In November 2000, the state had about 213,000 manufacturing workers, up from 211,000 the year before.

"They've added some additional workers, so they didn't have the big overtime numbers," said Tina Burghart, research analyst for the Kansas Department of Human Services.

The changes appear to indicate two ongoing business trends: the replacement of older, higher-wage workers; and the pressure on managers to cut production costs, said Nancy Bereman, associate dean of the business school at Wichita State University.

"A lot of employers are under cost pressure right now," Bereman said. Controlling overtime is a way to substantially reduce costs without having to take more disruptive actions such as layoffs.

The smaller paychecks also could be a result of companies hiring younger, less experienced workers who earn lower wages, she said.

# Commissioners debate alternate route

By Janet Craft

## The Goodland Daily News

Business owners filled the benches in the Sherman County commissioner's room Friday asking what could be done about an alternate route when the Kansas Department of Transportation is rebuilding K-27 north of Goodland between April and November.

The group was led by Goodland lawyer and business owner Pete Whalen, who said they were worried that traffic would not be coming down from Wheeler through Goodland during the six-month period.

"There's a lot of traffic that comes from there on K-27," he said. "We don't think we can afford to lose that for any time."

Whalen said the business owners think it's important and if an option for an alternate route is open, they would like to explore it. The state plans to post

a detour on K-25 through Colby, but has offered to help the county beef up a couple of gravel roads as alternates, one east and one west of K-27.

Commissioners turned down an offer for the state to pave the road north from Edson, saying the plan would cost the county too much. The county would have been responsible for preparation work and maintenance.

Wal-Mart manager Scott Schroller said he had done a zip code survey for the area north of Goodland and it showed that \$5,000 a day in sales comes from the region around St. Francis, Bird City and McDonald. He said the county would get 1.5 percent of that in sales tax dollars, and estimated having the road closed will cost the county as much as \$30,000.

"That's just my store," he said, "and then there are others."

Schroller said he has a lot of employees who travel from that area and they are concerned about what roads will be like to travel on if there is rain or snow.

"Our economy has really been hurt by farming and road construction," Schroller said.

Dale Neill, owner of KOA Kampground and a board member of the Sherman County Convention and Visitors Bureau, said Goodland has had two bad summers back to back due to road construction.

"We need to do whatever we can to keep the business in our community," he said.

Rick Billinger, a city commissioner and owner of Nationwide Mobile Home Sales, said times are really tough.

"I don't think any of us can afford to lose one customer," he said.

Karl Hildreth, Best Western Buffalo Inn owner, said according to population reports, Sherman County is losing 100 people a year.

He was worried about what would happen if the state shuts off a major artery for part of the year. He said taxes would probably go up.

"No one wants to see that road be-

ing closed," said Commissioner Chuck Frankenfeld. "I don't know what we can do."

Billinger asked if the state had offered to pave a detour road. Commissioner Mitch Tiede said they did two years ago.

Tiede said the detour would have been on Road 79 over to Road 28 by Edson. But he said there would be a 50,000-pound weight limit and the road could only carry unloaded trucks.

"Bids are to be let in February," Tiede said. "So basically, it's too late."

"They're going to kill the businesses," Whalen said. "There's got to be a better and more sensible solution."

"We agree," said Curt Way, county road and bridge supervisor.

"It's not an option we were given," Commissioner Kevin Rasure said.

"This basically was decided two years ago," Way added.

Way said that on Road 79, the hills would have to be cut down at the county's expense.

He said the county had checked into doing one side at a time, but the state said no. Way said he had talked to an engineer in December 1998 who told him it would probably result in unacceptable costs.

Way said he doubted the state would change its plans at this time.

Billinger asked if the county could

delay the project for another year.

"That road (K-27 north of town) won't last another year," Tiede said.

"If we can convince them to do a detour, would you guys have a problem with it?" Billinger asked.

"You can try it if you want, Rick," Frankenfeld said, "but basically that's what we went to Norton for."

Ron Harding, executive director of the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce, said they had asked the state to do side-by-side construction with a pilot car, but the request was denied. "We don't want the road closed," Billinger said.

Whalen asked for the project number so that people could talk to their legislators about the road.


County Attorney Bonnie Selby asked if there was a consensus about where an alternate route would be.

Schroller said the majority wanted side-by-side construction.

"This is more expensive," Tiede said, "so they might not be able to do a side-by-side."

"We'd all feel better if we could pursue this," Whalen said. "Thanks for listening to us."

The commissioners will meet again at 8 a.m. on Monday in the commissioner's room of the courthouse. At that meeting, they will be sworn in and get organized for the year.



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