

Yearly garden tour keeps on growing

TOUR, from Page 1

ago, but didn't really get serious until this summer. She said it's been tough, physical work.

"There's a semi-load of rocks here," Dorothy said. "I tell you, we've been working our butts off."

But, she added, it's been worth it. "Now that we're done," she said, "we can just sit back and enjoy it."

Of course, a gardener's work is never done.

Kim Bohme, who lives on Texas Avenue, said she spends more hours than she can count working in her front and back yards each week. She told participants that she waters her plants twice a day and weeds and trims daily.

When she hears the wind stirring in the middle of the night, she said, she gets out of bed to bring in her potted plants. Tour participants nodded in agreement.

Many of the hosts have transformed pasture land into paradise. "We've come a long way in 2 1/2 years," said Kathy Melia, who lives

three and a half miles west of town with her husband Marty, owner of the radio stations in Goodland.

Where there was once a huge field of grass, there are now colorful flowers and an abundant vegetable garden. Kathy Melia said the garden and yard is still in its infancy, but takes tons of work to maintain.

"It takes lots of hours every week," she said, "to keep things weeded and mowed."

In the 4 1/2 years that Kevin and Christie Rasure, owners of Rasure Lumber, have lived three miles west of Goodland, they've built a waterfall in their back yard and added huge flower and vegetable gardens.

Christie Rasure said she uses peat moss, sheep manure and grass clippings as mulch, and covers her vegetable garden in shredded newspaper to improve the soil consistency and protect the plants.

The only drawback to using paper, she said, is that it's a wood product and therefore takes longer to break down. This year, she said, she will probably burn off the garden after

the growing season has passed.

Christie, who organizes the tour with her husband, said they started it as a home and garden tour seven or eight years ago, but switched it to the Yarden Tour because people were apprehensive about opening their homes.

She said they've been holding the tour for five years and it's steadily becoming more popular. This year, she said, it drew people from surrounding counties.

In the past, she said, they've donated proceeds to Hospice Services or the Northwest Kansas Animal Shelter. This year, Kevin Rasure said, they raised \$365 for the Sherman County Historical Society.

Christie said they typically show off gardens and yards belonging to their customers, who are using new items from the store.

"It's so we can highlight products, too," she said.

The tour also included Marvin and Bonnie Selby's home on Grand Avenue and Jerry Nett's garden on Kansas Avenue.

Group strives to make city grow

DEVELOPMENT, from Page 1

a group that helps young people.

Those are the small projects. The big one is why the corporation was formed in the first place.

Goodwin said he enjoys roller hockey in his free-time, but there is no large, smooth surface in Goodland where the game can be played. So, he figured, why not build an arena?

With help from Jo Simmons, Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce office manager, he said, he gathered a group of people who want to lend a hand.

With a former teacher, the art center director and the city/county recreation director as members, Goodwin said, the group decided not only to build the arena, but find other ways to improve Goodland.

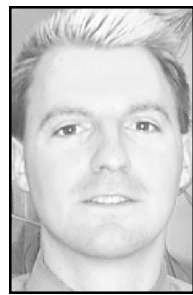
Corporation members — many northwest Kansas natives who have moved back after leaving — say the group isn't going to be all talk.

Mitch Hixson, a 30-year-old Colby native who moved to Goodland from Ottawa (where he was an eighth-grade teacher) four days after Goodwin, said the only requirement to be a member of the group is that you want to make an impact.

Hixson, recently hired as the assistant volleyball coach at Goodland High, said he's most interested in making life better for young people here and is excited about helping to establish Big Brothers and Big Sisters. At a meeting Monday,



Goodwin



Hixson

Goodwin was named president and Hixson vice president of the board that is starting the program.

Now a salesman with Homeland Real Estate, Hixson said he became disillusioned and frustrated with the education system. His father, Warren Hixson, is Colby's mayor and owns the Homeland office there.

Hixson said the corporation is action-oriented, which means members are not going to be just sitting around talking.

One of the group's first projects is to revive the "Junk Parade," a town cleanup where people gather up trash in their yards and homes and all haul it to the county landfill at the same time, free of charge.

Goodwin said the parade stopped eight to 10 years ago because the landfill started requiring that items be separated. He said the corporation plans to ask civic organizations here to be responsible for collecting one type of item, such as appliances or yard waste,

and taking all of them to the landfill.

Members are asking the county to waive landfill fees for the parade, which they want to hold on Sept. 22, before the annual Flatlander Fall Festival.

Other than being ready to do a little work, Hixson said, those who join aren't required to make any kind of donations or pay any dues. In fact, he said, they aren't expecting any donations from anyone.

Goodwin, who graduated in 1997 from Southern Methodist University with degrees in finance and economics, said the group is working to become a non-profit organization, which will allow it to receive grants. He said the corporation will be seeking money from private foundations that don't require recipients to have a cash match.

The \$3 million community center/sports arena, he said, will be built with grant money. The corporation plans to put up the center within three years on land given by an anonymous donor.

Goodwin said the facility will include basketball, tennis and volleyball courts, along with a computer lab, a meeting room and other amenities. He and other corporation members hope the center and other projects they are planning to finish will attract more people to Goodland.

First, Hixson said, they may have to change some minds.

"We want to help turn people's attitudes around," he said, "from 'we can't do that' to 'anything is possible.'"

Teaching vacancies cause problems

WICHITA (AP) — With a new school year starting in less than a month, school districts across the state are scrambling to find qualified teachers to fill vacancies.

The openings are especially critical in special education, math, science and foreign language.

The problem has been building for years because of a decrease in the number of people studying to become teachers.

"It's bad — in fact, it's beyond bad," said Wichita Superintendent Winston Brooks. "Every indication in our district is that this isn't just talk anymore. It's happening."

Before the 2000-01 school year, Kansas school districts reported about 530 teacher vacancies, compared to 196 during the 1999-2000 school year. The state expects as many or more vacancies this fall. The state has about 34,500 teachers.

The Wichita School District has 120 vacancies for full-time teachers and only a handful of qualified applicants. About half of the vacancies are in special education and, as of last week, no one had applied for any of those jobs.

In response, the district says it will have to shuffle certified teachers, increase class sizes or hire full-time substitutes to fill vacancies. And the schools also may not be able to offer certain courses.

The vacancies also are a financial drain because a district's special-education funding from the state is tied to the number of special-education teachers on its staff. For every special-education teaching vacancy that goes unfilled, Wichita will lose up to \$20,000 in state funding.

Districts around Wichita, such as Derby and Andover, say they don't have vacancies, but it's taking longer and getting harder to fill spots.

"It was much tougher this year," said

Andy Koenigs, assistant superintendent for curriculum and personnel in Andover. His district is close to filling its last vacancy, but had to increase class sizes in high school Spanish because it couldn't find a Spanish teacher.

"We go to career fairs, and this year was the first time there were more school districts than kids," he said. The career fair at Fort Hays State University, for instance, used to draw more than 500 students looking for teaching jobs.

"This year they just dribbled in," Koenigs said.

Most educators agree that salary and benefit packages are a major hindrance to attracting teachers. Businesses are able to offer much better pay and benefits than most school districts.

The average salary for professions requiring a bachelor's degree is almost \$48,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The average teacher salary in Kansas is \$33,021.

Corporation has big plans for changes

PROJECTS, from Page 1

the director of the Regional Prevention Center, to establish a Big Brothers and Big Sisters program.

Mitch Hixson, a former school teacher and corporation director, said the program can catch children before they "fall through the cracks" and help Hispanic youths feel more welcome. He said the center has a grant to start the program.

Helping Goodland become a "community of promise" through America's Promise, which Secretary of State Colin Powell formed to help young people.

Hixson said a community can join the organization by working to fulfill five "promises" to youths, which include caring adults, safe places, healthy start, marketable skills and opportunities to serve.

- Finding ways to make Goodland more attractive.

Goodwin said the corporation plans to plant trees around the city and organize a "Junk Parade," where people will be encouraged to clean their yards and remove old appliances or other trash.

- Building a 110,000-square-foot, \$3 million community center/sports arena behind the Comfort Inn on K-27.

Goodwin said the corporation plans

to build the facility, which will feature basketball and volleyball courts and a computer lab, within three years.

The group is planning other short-term projects, Goodwin said, which will seek to beautify Goodland, help youth here or help the community.

Members of the corporation include Rebecca Downs, director of the Carnegie Arts Center; Dr. Sid Unruh, owner of Unruh Family Chiropractic; Scott Weber, assistant manager at Aten Department Store; Scott Lockhart, senior forecaster at the National Weather Service; Tim Pacello, a Wal-Mart employee; and Jason Hickson, the city-county recreation director.

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