

# Progress doesn't have to be big to count

Not all progress this past year came with grand pronouncements, huge headlines and a 100-member marching band.

Sometimes it was nothing more than a new picnic table shelter.

Max Saint built a shelter at Smoky Gardens Lake last year as his Eagle Scout project. The Sherman County commissioners paid about \$1,300 for the materials and Saint and other Scouts put it together. The commissioners said they appreciated the project, because it was a cheap way to get a new shelter.

Other groups and people made small steps towards helping their town in the past year.

The Sherman County Historical Society helped preserve the city's past when it bought the Handy House, a Victorian built in 1907 with help from a \$50,000 grant from the state. The group held a grand opening for the house July 3 last year, and gives tours of it during the week.

Young people were encouraged to donate their pennies to build the new Pioneer Park. Red and blue plastic piggy banks lettered with "Fill My Pig for Pioneer Park" were set up at businesses and offices around town.

Gene Tromble, a retired Methodist minister who organized a group to raise money for the park, said he got the idea when a fourth-grade boy asked him if there was anything he could do to help the project.

Tromble said he decided that getting children involved in the project would give them a stake in the park, and kids will feel more a part of the community if they are able to contribute.

The Goodland Municipal Airport attracted a Brewster couple to town last year when Dan and Beverly Barker relocated their spraying business here and built a new hangar for their plane.

Downtown Goodland lost an icon when Dairy Queen moved from Main to the west side of K-27, but the store is making more money, said owner Danny Whalen, which means more comes in from sales taxes. More people are probably stopping off the Interstate, he said, bringing in money that Goodland might never have seen.

The city bought the old IGA Building in March, and has talked about moving the police and fire departments there, and maybe converting the front into a community center. The building had been empty since Mosburg's IGA closed in 1999, and it suffered a fire soon after.

The city passed a plan last month which it hopes will help the economic development of the town. The city has agreed to help pay utility connection and permit fees for new and expanding businesses.

Already, one emerging business, a new Taco John's on K-27, is benefiting from the



Plastic piggy banks were set up all over Goodland last year to encourage youngsters to get involved with Pioneer Park.

Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

plan.

Some events are bigger than others. In September the now-defunct Goodland Development Corp. organized a "Junk Parade." Businesses and organizations put together floats of old appliances, yard waste and other trash, paraded them down Main and took

them out to the county landfill, which waived most of its fees for the event.

Schylar Goodwin and Mitch Hixon, who coordinated the event, said not only was it a way to clean the streets, it was a way for people to show pride for their community. They're planning a repeat this year.



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# Road construction almost finished

By Doug Stephens

*The Goodland Daily News*

Construction on the highways in and around Goodland is nearly done, and while drivers and businesses have complained for the past three years, the result will be brand new roads on nearly every inch of highway in Sherman County.

This year's construction has been slight compared to last year, when Goodland was blocked from all directions. K-27 was closed north to the county line, and from the intersection of K-27-U.S. 24 north to Eighth Street. Cherry was closed for reconstruction and I-70 was restricted to just two lanes. For a time, the Cattletrail entry (now closed) was the only way into downtown Goodland.

This year, the west side of the K-27/U.S. 24 intersection was closed in March, blocking off Old U.S. 24 for about a block to the west, and reducing K-27 to two lanes for a few blocks.

A roundabout detour was necessary to get to businesses to the west.

In May, workers closed down the east side of the intersection, and Business U.S. 24 was closed for about a block up to the entry of the old Gibson's parking lot. Westbound traffic is detoured through the parking lot. Sharon's Taco Place can be reached through the Buffalo Inn parking lot, and Short and Son from Cattletrail.

Many Goodland drivers ignored and drove around construction signs when the work switched sides of the intersection, prompting the police, sheriff's department, and state troopers to patrol the roads.

Businesses on both sides of the intersection complained about business being down with the work on the intersection, but most said they weren't hurt as much as they had predicted. One business west on Old U.S. 24 closed down, however, citing the construction as the "straw that broke the camel's back."

The intersection is being repaved with concrete, and traffic lights have been installed, which will replace the four-way stop signs.

In 2000, K-27 was rebuilt and repaved from the intersection south to I-70, getting rid of a raised median. Business complained



Workers from Ritchie Paving smoothed freshly poured concrete on K-27 last week. The whole U.S. 24/K-27 intersection should be repaved by Thursday, Aug. 1.  
Photo by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

that the work blocked access to their lots and that the contractor, Smith Sand and Gravel, was slow in getting the work done, dragging it into the winter.

Last summer, K-27 was closed to Eighth Street and on a separate project, Cherry was shut down while the road was ripped out and replaced. The intersection of Cherry and U.S. Business 24 moved west, and the old wye disappeared. During the work, Dollar General and Pizza Hut could only be reached by using Eustis, and Custom Paintworks could not be reached by a road at all.

The construction in town this year will be finished by Thursday, Aug. 1, said Donna

Binning, construction engineer for the Kansas Department of Transportation, or the prime contractor, Ritchie Paving, will face fines up to \$1,000 per day.

Goodland gained a new access off of Business U.S. 24. A new stretch of Wyoming was put in between the Buffalo Inn and Sharon's Taco, connecting with 19th Street, which was paved from Wyoming to Cattletrail.

The new access was needed, because the "hook" connecting Cattletrail to K-27 will become a one-way road northbound, to serve trucks going to the grain elevators. People going south on Cattletrail will need to use the new 19th-Wyoming route to get

to K-27.

By the end of the summer, Cattletrail will be repaved from K-27 to 16th Street.

Traffic on I-70 is reduced to two lanes while crews repair bridges from Kanorado to 5 miles west of Goodland. East on I-70, crews are rebuilding asphalt in Thomas County, west of Colby.

Both projects should be done by March, said Binning.

In 1999 and 2000 in two projects, the pavement on the freeway was ripped out from Goodland to Edson, and was rebuilt with

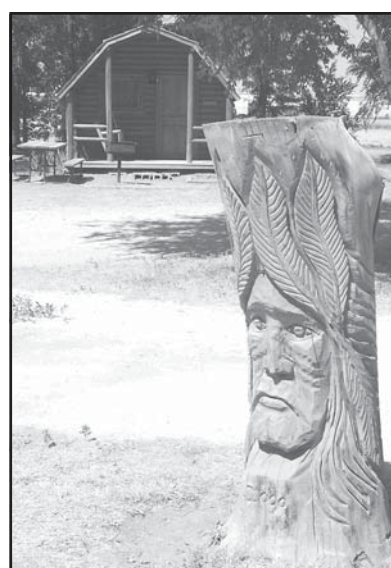
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# Almost every area highway has been replaced

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new concrete on a rebuilt base. Traffic was limited to two lanes for two summers.

At the same time in 2000, a slurry seal was applied to I-70 from Goodland to Kanorado. Chriss McDiffett, district engineer for the department in Norton, said the seal was designed to preserve the concrete pavement until it can be replaced. No date has been set for any work on the freeway west of Goodland.

This spring, drivers north of Goodland were held up, sometimes for as long as 15 minutes, while crews laid a final layer of pavement on K-27 to the Cheyenne County line.

Last year, the road was ripped out and replaced and was closed from March to October, while traffic was detoured through Atwood and Colby.

Many businesses on K-27 complained they were losing money because of the closing.

K-27 was paved from Goodland south to the Wallace County line last year with an asphalt overlay.

Binning said it was a stopgap until the road can be completely rebuilt.

After this year's highway work, no more construction is scheduled until 2005 and 2006, when the road south of Goodland will be rebuilt in two projects, which include re-



placing a bridge over the North Fork of the Smoky Hill River.

The driving delays, the lost business and the frustration will finally have a pay-off. Other than I-70 west of town, there will be no highways left to replace.

Drivers will have a smooth ride on every state road in the county.



A worker with Cahoj Earthmoving of Atwood (left picture) tested the ground after the pavement was torn off of Cattletrail this spring. A crew from Ritchie Paving (above) shoveled wet concrete into place.  
Photos by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News



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# New facilitator hired to help businesses

DEVELOPMENT, from Page 4

was awarded one of the three state grants in February, and have been getting the program organized, with the first task being the hiring of an enterprise facilitator. Sam Lane of Garden City will begin the job with a week-long training session — along with 11 members of the board — the last week of July at the Northwest Kansas Technical College.

The three-year program is expected to help develop business successes throughout the six-county area. The facilitator will travel all six counties and will be available on an appointment basis.

In the fall, there was talk about a new Sears catalogue store coming to the area, and when the owner decided to go to Colby, there were rumors that the Chamber had been part of the reason.

The store opened in Colby with great fanfare, but the store has already changed hands as the original owner has left.

There were other rumors, and a sense that at times the Chamber, the city and the county were working at cross purposes.

The situation came to a head at the end of March, when the Alco Discount Store closed without any warning. Company officials said the store was not making enough money to warrant keeping it open.

Duckwalls, which celebrated 100 years in



Workers began moving merchandise out of the Alco building the day the store closed.

Photo by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

business in April 2001, first opened in Goodland in 1925. The Alco Store, operated by the same firm, opened in 1970. With another major empty building on Main Street, ques-

tions surfaced about the Chamber and city and county efforts. Again Goodwin took a hand, sending out letters asking people to attend a meeting to talk about the problem.

Goodwin, and many other younger people, had been discouraged by the lack of support they had found, and decided it was time to make a change. There were about 20 people at the first meeting, but by the second meeting the number had grown to 85.

The basic topic was getting the Chamber, city and county working together. There was discussion of using the existing system or creating a new organization. At the third meeting, a steering committee was established to develop an organization which would have economic development as its purpose.

The organization established a seven-member board and has received the endorsement of the Chamber, the city and the county. The city has given the new organization \$12,000 to help get it going, and the Chamber has pledged support.

Funding from Sherman County will be about \$43,000, and the Sherman County Economic Development Council will operate as a part of the county. The commissioners approved a resolution establishing the council Tuesday, and the group is expected to begin setting goals and seeking a full-time economic development specialist.



Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer spoke during the grand opening of the Goodland Travel Information Center.

Photo by Eric Yonkey/The Goodland Daily News

## Tourist center to lure tax dollars

By Doug Stephens

*The Goodland Daily News*

The staff of a new state travel information center west of Goodland hopes to entice tourists to stay in Kansas a little longer, and maybe drop some cash while they are here.

The center 10 miles west of Goodland opened up at the end of April and celebrated with an official ribbon-cutting on Tuesday, May 15.

The new center should help bring money into the state, Supervisor Julie Crotinger said, because people who stop at travel centers usually spend up to an extra half day in the state, often buying things and helping state and local governments by providing sales taxes.

"They may not spend their money in the Goodland area," Crotinger said, "but money spent anywhere in the state does help us. There are a lot of benefits of tourism people don't see."

It took nearly a year to build the \$1.8 million structure, which replaces 20-year-old buildings torn down last year. After the old buildings were torn down, and before the new facility was finished, the staff of the center worked out of a trailer in a parking lot on K-27 south of I-70.

From their parking-lot trailer, the staff served only 40 to 100 people a day, Crotinger said. Now about 500 people come into the center every day, many for a free cup of coffee.

The center is at mile post 7 on the east-

bound side of the Interstate. To get to it from Goodland, a driver has to go to Kanorado and turn back.

It was originally scheduled to open on April 1, Crotinger said, but the Kansas Department of Transportation had to finish a few projects before then, like fixing some water leaks and replacing countertops.

The 7,400-foot facility includes electronic media displays, exhibit and information areas, and a public meeting room. There is room for a gift shop, but the center is still working through some red tape to figure out who will run it.

Transportation Secretary Dean Carlson, who was at the ribbon-cutting, said the center would help all of Kansas.

"This wonderful new facility gives visitors on I-70 a great first impression of our state," Carlson said, adding that, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression. This is as fine as any I've seen in the country."

The lobby of the center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the information section is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the summer and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year, closing only for state holidays.



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