

# School enrollment continues to drop

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

*The Oberlin Herald*

All but one school district in northwest Kansas lost enrollment this year, which under state rules means most will have to cut their budgets.

Most districts face possible staff cuts, and one may have to close soon.

The trend is nothing new. It's been going on for years. Only in Rexford, where the Golden Plains School District is growing because of a successful economic development project, is the picture much different.

In other school districts in northwest Kansas, including Goodland, Oberlin, Atwood, Herndon, Norton, St. Francis, Colby and Jennings, the population keeps going down. Some superintendents say the trend may be leveling off soon. In Goodland, the school chief says a new business may be what the district needs to start either maintaining its level or gaining kids.

In Jennings, one of the smallest districts in the area, the superintendent says they have started talking about what to do as they look at a projected enrollment next year under 50 students. It may mean closing the school or consolidating with a nearby district.

In the Goodland School District, Superintendent Marvin Selby said enrollment dropped 39 students from last year. He said the head count last year was 1,058 and this year it is 1,013.

He said the number is a little deceiving because the district has an adult education center downtown

## School enrollment figures

Only one school district in northwest Kansas gained enrollment this year.

- Rexford and Selden, the Golden Plains district gained 12 students for a total of 200.
- Goodland lost 39 students for a total of 1,013.
- Colby lost 38 students for a total of 1,037.
- St. Francis lost 40 students for a total of 365.
- Rawlins County lost 34 students for a total of 391.
- Oberlin lost seven students for a total of 465.
- Norton lost 10.7 students for a total of 755.
- Jennings lost 18 students for a total of 61.

and the head count includes those students.

Selby said that the year before, the district lost 20 students and it has been dropping in enrollment for about the last seven years.

There just aren't any jobs here to make people stay, he said. The district has had to reduce staff to offset the declining enrollment.

Selby said he hopes the trend will change next year and the district will start leveling off. Just last month, he said, the Aircraft Gasket and Seal Corp. announced that it is relocating from California to Goodland. He said the company will hire about 30 workers right away and hopefully will have 100 in a year. The district certainly hopes, he said, that would stop the decline in students and help the district break the trend.

Golden Plains, where workers at a new dairy have brought their families to live, gained 12 students. The superintendent, Dr. Roger Baskerville, said there are 200 kids in the kindergarten through 12th grade in the district.

In the last four years, he said, there was only one where the district declined in enrollment.

He cited two reasons that the district has gained students: The first is the dairy, which employs around 12 people, said Dr. Baskerville. The other is having affordable housing and being so close to Colby.

The school district is preparing for the future with a small building project at the grade school in Selden, Dr. Baskerville said, adding one big classroom and three office spaces.

The Oberlin School District re-

ported a decrease of seven students. At the high school, there are 238 students, while last year there were 245 for the Sept. 20 count. At the grade school, there are 227 students, the same as last year.

That makes a total of 465. This is a much smaller decrease than the district took the year before, when it lost 51 students.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said with the numbers the district has now, he thinks the it will level off at 450 students. That is something hard to predict, he added, and the district won't know until the kindergarten numbers for next year come in. Then there are always large and small classes graduating and coming in, he said, and the variations can make a difference.

The district lost a lot of students last year and then a few this year, said Glodt, so maybe it will just level off.

It all has to do with the economy and population of the entire school district, he said, and that is hard to predict.

To the east in Norton County, Superintendent Greg Mann said the head count this year is 755 students in preschool through the 12th grade. Last year, the district had 765.7 for the official head count.

Last year, said Mann, they graduated 70 seniors and they have an incoming kindergarten class this

year of 58. The kindergarten class was up 17 from the year before, he added, so the trends are not all bad.

Mr. Mann said the head count is up from 2000, but the full time equivalency number, which is used for budget calculations, is down. The head count is up because of high school students the district gets from Lenora. The Lenora district has a grade school but sends high school students to Norton. Lenora gets state money and pays Norton directly, so they don't get the state money for those students.

Mr. Mann said he thinks the district will drop in enrollment again next year and then will level off. There are some fairly stable large

employers that help maintain the student base, he said, including an aluminum fabrication plant and a state prison.

In the Colby School District, Business Manager Jo DeYoung said they anticipate a 4 percent decline each year. The last time the district saw any increase was nine years ago, back in 1994.

The head count last year, she said, was 1,075 and this year was 1,037, a 3.53 percent decrease.

DeYoung said Colby has an aging population, citizens are having fewer babies and people who graduate don't return. The grade school

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## Come to 26th Annual Nu Phi Mu Arts and Crafts Fair

Saturday, November 15, 2003

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Max Jones Field House

13th & Arcade

Goodland, Kan.

**FREE ADMISSION**

*Lunch Counter  
Babysitting Available*

Nu Phi Mu has donated 95% of our proceeds from the craft fair each year to local families and organizations. We want to thank those in the community who have supported us. Without you we would not be able to make the local donations we do. Contact Goodland High School Girls Athletic Association or come by their booth for information.

Thanks again to all of you who support us!

Members of Nu Phi Mu



### Spaghetti-To-Go (or Stay!)

*a fundraiser for MOPS,  
partnering with Thrivent*

\$4 per adult  
\$2 per child



WHEN: 5-8 p.m.  
Thursday,  
Nov. 13, 2003

WHERE: Emmanuel  
Lutheran  
Church  
220 W. 13th

### Christmas opening

Saturday, Nov. 15, 2003

\*Precious Moments nativity set,  
ornaments and figurines.

\*Cherished Teddies ornaments and  
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\*Wooden ornaments from the Holy  
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## PRE-HOLIDAY

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Sunday, November 16 • 1-5 p.m.

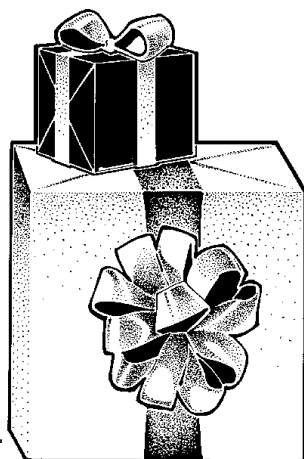
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Goodland's holiday opening celebration

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Nu Phi Mu and "We Did It" Craft Fairs

Max Jones Fieldhouse and VFW Post

**Ambassador's Holiday Reception**

Chamber Office, 10th & Main, 5 p.m. MST

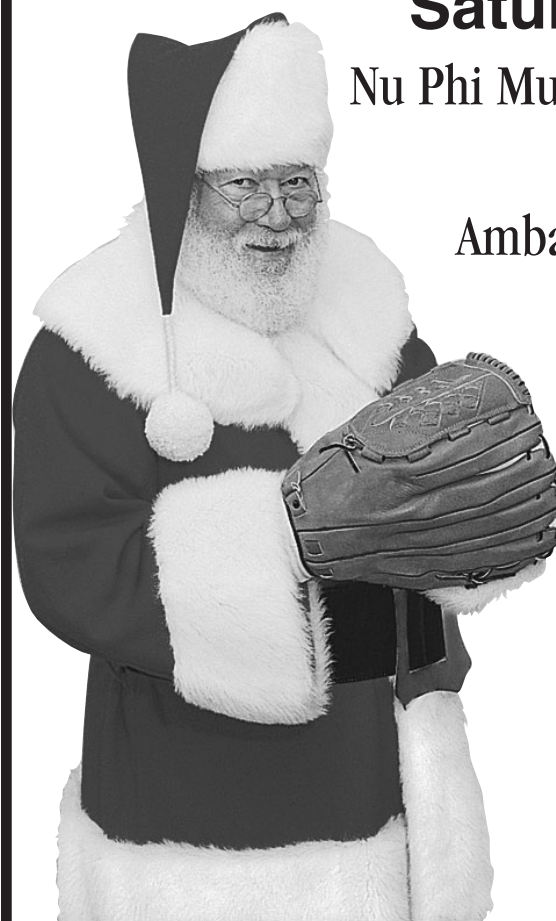
**Holiday Parade  
Santa arrives!**

Main Street - 4:30 p.m.

**Holiday Lights Illumination**

**Children's Visit  
with Santa**

Immediately after the parade  
Chamber Office, 10th and Main



**FREE Movie Matinee**

Saturday & Sunday - November 15-16 - 1:30 p.m.

Sponsored by Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce - BANKWEST of  
Kansas - Aten's Department Store - Bowman's Heating & Air  
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**Extended Shopping hours and  
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Celebration sponsored by: Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce

The  
**Goodland Star-News**