

# Cards help blended families

By Sharon Corcoran

scorcoran@nwkansas.com

Been looking for the perfect greeting card for your wicked step-mom? Having trouble blending your own little "Brady Bunch"? Then a Goodland woman has created the perfect solution.

Brenda McCants, retired director of marketing and volunteer services from Goodland Regional Medical Center, and wife of First National Bank President Larry McCants kept a journal of comments and experiences from their blended family to springboard a line of greeting cards to help others in the same situation.

Statistics show blended families are common, she said, actually making up one half of families in America. A lot of people are dealing with the emotions and stresses that come with blending families, she said, with one in three Americans being in some type of blended families.

By 2010, she said, blended families are projected to be the predominant family form in the United States, McCants said — about 1,300 new stepfamilies are formed every day in this country.

Her Blending Moments cards include greetings to "Wicked Step-mom" and "Wicked Step-dad," the "Broccoli Bunch" and "It's okay to have a tearful moment... blending isn't easy!"

Brenda McCants said the cards depict things her kids said, such as "You're not my mom!"

"I'm an adoptive mom as well as a step-mom," she said, "so that has special meaning for me."

She said her reply was often, "I'm sorry — you kids don't come with a manual. Excuse me — I'm a parent in training."

When she and Larry married, she brought a son and a daughter to the family and he two sons. The kids were 6, 8, 10 and 12 at the time, and besides getting used to a new "parent," they had to get used to a whole different way of life.

Mrs. McCants' children had only known the metropolis life in Charlotte, N.C., and had to get used to rural life in Goodland.

She said her daughter asked, "Where's the mall?" and she had to tell her the tallest building here is a grain elevator. That didn't sit well with a 10-year-old girl, McCants said.

Humor helped the family get through the tough times, she said, adding that she kept a journal in the hopes she could someday help others with blended families. "Wicked Step-mom" is intended in a humorous way, she said; step-mothers have had a negative connotation since Cinderella.

McCants said she and Larry's sons have been able to joke about that — as a matter of fact, when she calls and they're not home, she leaves a message starting with, "This is your wicked step-mom calling."

Building a blended family feels like an uphill battle, she said — you can't expect a blended family to blend instantly. Parenting is so rewarding, she said, but any parent will have challenges, and blending two families adds a few more.

Like on the cards, she uses food and cooking metaphors to describe blended family situations, saying they fit. It's like baking a cake, she



Brenda McCants (above left) and Tammy Neal worked together on "Blending Moments" greeting cards, which are based on McCants' journal about blending her family with husband Larry's. The cards use animated foods and kitchen utensils to depict situations blended families face. One card design (right) uses an onion to depict a "blending moment" and says inside, "blending isn't easy." Photo by Amy Fenner

said — it doesn't happen fast, and you have to have all the ingredients. Patience is a key ingredient, she added.

"There were times we tried too hard to make it work," McCants said. "We wanted everyone to like each other, but it took time to get along."

It's important to show respect and keep the lines of communication open, she said; you're bringing different values together and different ways of doing things.

Using animated characters to depict the situations takes the person out of the situation, McCants says, and focuses on the issue, something that is important for smoothing over emotions and hurt feelings.

McCants' business partner and friend Tammy Neal, vice president of Creative Consulting and vice president of marketing and sales for Blending Moments Greeting Cards, became involved in the venture after seeing the cards.

"She came over and saw the cards," McCants said, "and got really excited. She offered to work with me."

Neal related to the situations in the cards, McCants said, even though she didn't grow up in a blended family because after her dad died when she was an adult and her mom remarried, she always found it hard to send her step-dad a card, not because she doesn't like him, but because she was close to her dad

and doesn't want to feel like she's replacing him.

McCants says she grew up in an "Ozzie and Harriet" environment, and her parents are going on their 60th anniversary. Divorce wasn't an option, she said.

And it wasn't planned for her life, but it happened. It is what it is, she said.

In bringing McCants' words to life, she gets help from Illustrator Erin Terry from Colorado Springs. She works with Danker and Danker Public Relations out of Brentwood, Tenn., and Blending Moments is a member of the Greeting Card Association, a trade organization that represents greeting card and stationary publishers and allied members of the industry.

She unveiled the cards at a trade show in Greensboro, S.C., where she has family, and sells the cards at the Almond Tree in Goodland, Donna's Gift Palace in St. Francis, Buds and Blooms in Burlington and



at www.blendingmoments.com.

She puts Goodland, Kan., on the back of each card and says she is proud to say the company is from here and to say the cards can be bought at the Almond Tree in Goodland.

"I think it's good to promote our community," she said.

She has been interviewed on WIBW-TV in Topeka, on KWGN-TV in Denver and on radio talk shows. She looks forward to being recognized as a newcomer at the Greeting Card Association's annual convention in La Jolla, Calif.

McCants said she has had a lot of help from friends in launching the cards, and she credits divine intervention for her success.

"God has been good to me," she said.

# Minutes keep council busy

By Tom Betz

ntbetz@nwkansas.com

Approval of meeting minutes normally go quickly, but at Tuesday's Sherman County Economic Development Council meeting approval of minutes from two special meetings in August were hot topics and one set got amended.

Minutes from special meetings held on Aug. 26 and Aug. 29 were questioned by Larry Keirns, council member and retired college president. After talking about the two sets of minutes one was amended and the other approved as presented.

Keirns asked about the special meeting minutes from the 7 a.m. meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 26.

Seven council members had attended the meeting including Danny Archer, Jerry Fairbanks, Don Newell, Chance Schilling, Steve West and Chuck Wilkens held at Western State Bank.

Keirns' first objection was that he had not been notified of the meeting, and asked why the appraisal price for the building at 17th and Broadway was not in the minutes.

"I would think the appraisal price ought to be in the minutes," Keirns said.

Wilkens, council chairman and owner of Wilkens Truck and Tractor, said he was not sure about adding the appraisal price in the minutes. He did say the cost of the appraisal had been \$2,000 and that Walt Adams, who donated the building, had paid half.

"At this point Wilkens Truck and Tractor has paid the other \$1,000," he said.

He said the appraisal was done to give Adams a price to show for his contribution.

Council member Walt Linthacum, of L. & W. Andrist Insurance, said he would like to see the appraisal price and valuation be in the minutes somewhere.

"I see no value of having it in the minutes," said West, council member from Western State Bank.

Linthacum said he had missed the meeting and would like to see the appraisal.

Keirns said he thought the figures should be in the minutes and made a motion to amend the minutes to have the figures added.

"I think it is important," he said, "especially if Chuck is paying \$1,000, and is waiting for this group to see if they are going to pay him for his half of the cost of the appraisal."

Nancy Cole, council member and owner of Klip 'N Kurl Salon, asked who was going to pay the insurance on the building and didn't they need to have the value for that.

West said the county would pay the insurance under their umbrella policy, and that the county appraiser's valuation would not change.

Keirns restated his motion to have the appraised value and county appraised value included in the minutes of the Aug. 26 meeting. The motion passed 6 to 1 with West voting No.

The appraisal was done by Leo Hayden on the building at 212 E. 17th and showed a value of \$146,550. The county appraiser's office showed a valuation of \$52,630, and the property taxes for the building for 2007 were \$2,174.

Keirns had questions about the set of minutes from a special meeting held at noon on Friday, Aug. 29 at Gambino's.

Again he said he had not been

notified of the meeting, and Development Office Manger Helen Dobbs said when she called he had already left for the Friday Rotary club meeting.

Council members attending the second special meeting included Wilkens, West, Cole, Schilling, Mike Cochran and Archer.

Keirns' question was about the motion made to accept the building and the change in the amount of money that was estimated to fix the roof. He said at a previous meeting of the council when he was present a motion was made by Jerry Fairbanks council member from First National Bank, and that at that time the cost of the roof repair was set at \$10,000, but in the minutes of the special meeting of Aug. 29 the roof repair amount had been estimated at \$15,000 to \$28,000.

"I would like you to clarify how that got changes," he asked.

Fairbanks said he was at the first special meeting, but not at the second meeting.

West said several council members met with the Sherman County commissioners about the donation, and that the Adams' wanted something done by the end of August.

He said Wilkens had contacted roofers and they came back to say that \$10,000 would not fix the roof.

"We went to the county commissioners with that information," West said. "The felt it was a good deal and said they had the money set aside to fix the roof. We had an emergency meeting to approve the donation. That brings you up to speed."

"The motion Jerry made was changed with what we heard from the county commissioners," Wilkens said.

West said the council members voted to approve the donation with the understanding from the county that they would help fix the roof.

"I want to thank the commissioners about being willing to accept the property and to see it as economic development."

"Walt Adams did this in good spirit and generosity, hoping that others will do the same in the future to help the community. It is good for us and good for the community."

Linthacum said Adams said the building donation was not as large as the Cheyenne County donation, but it was all he could do.

Keirns said he did not see how the council could override the previous motion.

"The council was in agreement that we did not have money to fix the roof," Wilkens said. "We felt we could go up to \$10,000 to fix the roof, and that was all we could do."

"In the meeting with the county commissioners they said they had money to fix the roof. With that approval we went ahead and accepted the building on behalf of the county."

The minutes were approved 6-1 with Keirns voting No.

## corrections

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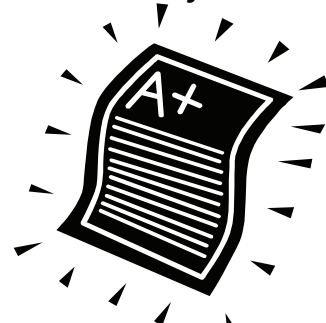
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