

# Rebate reward for improvements

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“The tax rebate program is open to all real estate in the county,” he said, “and it is a refund of the property taxes paid on the assessed value added to the property because of the improvements.

“In 1994, the state Legislature passed the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan to allow tax rebates for new construction and the improvement of existing structures. It has been successful in Pratt and other places, and we have taken their plan and made a few change to fit our county.”

The council approved the rebate plan and sent it to the county commissioners, city commission and school board for review and approval. Timm said they plan to have the three boards approve the plan so it is available before the end of the year.

The rebate program would provide incentives for housing improvement through property tax refunds, Timm said, and can help create jobs and reverse the exodus of people from the city.

County Commissioner Kevin Rasure thanked the incentive committee and Timm for the work to put the two packages together. He said he is pleased that the programs can be put into effect this year.

Basically, the plan requires a property owner to make a minimum \$5,000 investment in improving a property. The work has to comply with all building codes, and in the city, the owner needs to have a building permit.

Once the improvements are done, the property is inspected by the

county assessor, and the rebate will apply to the taxes on the improvements. The property taxes on the property as it was are not part of the rebate program. The tax rebate will apply to the county, city and school district portion of the property tax, but will not apply to the state levy.

Qualified improvements include new construction, rehabilitation and additions. There are some non-real estate items that qualify, such as sprinkling systems, fences, landscaping, gazebos, garden type structures, patios, hot tubs, in ground swimming pools, irrigation wells and equipment, both agriculture and residential.

Timm said the owners need to understand that every dollar spent may not necessarily equal to a dollar of increased value. That is up to the appraiser, based on market resale value.

Improvements that began in January are eligible for this program, he said, but the property owner is the one who needs to apply for the rebate. Applications for projects that did not start in January must be filed and approved before the construction begins.

The owner will pay the full amount of property taxes, and after the taxes are paid, the county will rebate up to 90 percent of the taxes tied to the improvements.

There are different applications for residential improvements and business improvements, Timm said.

For residential property there is a sliding scale over a 10-year period with the rebate starting at 90 percent for the first three years and dropping by 10 percent per year until it is

down to a 20 percent rebate for the 10th year.

For the houses that are valued at \$25,000 or less, the rebate will be 95 percent for the first five years and 50 percent for the next five years.

Commercial or industrial property has a different schedule depending on how much of an investment is being made. For projects up to \$500,000, the rebate is similar to the schedule for residential relief, starting at 90 percent for the first three years, and then dropping by 10 percent a year until it is down to 20 percent the 10th year.

Commercial and industrial investments of \$500,000 to \$3,000,000 will be rebated at 90 percent for six years, drops to 70 percent the seventh year, 60 percent the eighth year, 50 percent the ninth year and 20 percent the 10th year. Commercial investments over \$3 million will have their taxes rebated 90 percent for the first six years and 75 percent for the next five years.

Timm said parts of the new industrial complex being developed north of Caruso will qualify for this program, but that the power plant will not because the plans do not call for selling at least 50 percent of the generated output across state lines.

The program will have an opening date to include anything started at the first of this year, and will continue through the end of 2007. At the end of the three years the city, county and school board will review the plan and decide if it is to continue.

Timm said that once a rebate is approved, it remains in effect for the full 10 years even if the property is sold.

# U.S. Army: Up close and personal

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The tour included a visit to shops within the allied trades section, such as carpentry, canvas repair, glass cutting and repair, radiator repair and sheet metal fabrication.

Following the tour, the guests were taken for a quick look at Specialist Lee’s barracks room to see the kind of living quarters some junior soldiers have. After that the visitors got a look inside one of the dining facilities.

The trio then left Fort Riley, heading for Nickell Barracks in Salina where several national guard units and organizations are co-located on the west side of the city. After spending the night at Nickell Hall,

the next stop was the Kansas Military Academy, where Guard officer candidates report for their weekend training.

The group next visited Company A of the 1st Battalion, 108th Aviation, which is located in Salina but also has a detachment in Texas. There the guests were introduced to 1st Lt. Patrick Goss, the company commander, who gave them a tour of the unit’s facility and a closeup look at several Blackhawk helicopters.

They got to check out some of the night vision devices used by pilots. One of the items Lt. Goss demonstrated was a disposable “chemlight” that when activated was only visible through the devices.

The final stop of the trip was to a

training facility, where the Kansas guard has tank and fighting vehicle simulators. There the guests got to try “driving” both types of vehicles and firing their weapons systems.

“The greatest experience of the whole trip was getting to use the tank and Bradley simulators,” Studer said. “It’s remarkable that they could make something that realistic. It made you feel like just like you were inside a real tank.”

Studer said he now has a much greater understanding of the military, its equipment, its capabilities, and a better appreciation for the men and women who serve.

“I’d like to thank Sgt. Frecks for the opportunity to go,” he said, “and really look forward to doing it again.”

# Principal feels ready for return to work Monday

RETURN, from Page 1

“I feel like I dodged a bullet,” Swager said. “I am taking it one day at a time, and am feeling quite a bit stronger. I was able to go to church on Sunday, but those steps really took my strength.

“I hope to be back at work for a few hours on Monday, but I do have some continuing trouble with one lung, and if it gets worse, it could delay my return by a week or so.

“I miss the kids, and am looking forward to getting back, but I will listen to my doctors and will not try to do it too fast.”

Swager said his trouble started while he was supervising the foot-

ball game at Cowboy Stadium on Sept. 16. He said he felt fine until later than evening, when he went to the emergency room and they thought he was so bad they flew him to Denver.

“I have some trouble catching up on dates,” he said. “I was out for about nine days, and my brother told me I missed one whole hurricane. I remember Katrina, but guess I missed Rita totally.

“We have lots of people to thank for all the support from the community. We feel fortunate to live in Goodland, and all the people have been great.

“The second grade sent me a wonderful get-well card.”



Kin Huang, president of the Sherman County Community Foundation; Wilmer Bahe, a foundation board member; and Brent Wood, a Knights of Columbus representative, watched elementary students charge through their activities as part of a health and nutrition presentation at the after school program last week.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

# After school program in second year

By Sharon Corcoran

*The Goodland Star-News*

A program to keep children busy and safe after school is in its second year and growing, thanks to support from several area agencies, businesses and a state grant, and help from the Sherman County Community Foundation.

This year’s program got a boost from a \$19,321 Prevention Trust Fund Grant from the Kansas Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority.

The money is for after-school programs in Sherman, Thomas and Decatur counties, with Sherman County getting \$6,375. The program began this month and runs through March.

A Wal-Mart grant of \$500 given to the Knights of Columbus in February was passed on to the After School Coalition Committee through the Community Foundation last week.

The \$500 grant for was put in the hands of the foundation because it had to go to a tax-exempt organization, which the Knights are not, said Kin Huang, president of the foundation. Following the Knights’ wishes, the foundation gave the money to the after-school program to help with refreshments.

Huang, Wilmer Bahe, foundation board member, and Brent Wood of the Knights went to Central Elementary after school last Tuesday to see the program in action. Students from Central, North and West elementary schools participated in a program on health and nutrition by Karen Jones, northwest area food and nutrition specialist K-State Research and Extension.

The representatives saw the children, in teams, run to pick up envelopes and then do the exercises in them, including skipping around the room and doing jumping jacks.

They presented a check to Terri Richardson, representing the coalition, on behalf of LaDonna Frerichs, coordinator for the Sunflower Extension District, who was not available.

The Sherman County Extension office, now combined with the Wallace County program under the new district, decided last year that the after-school program was needed.

Dana Belshe, agriculture agent, and Frerichs contacted organizations to help start the program. Sponsors included Big Brothers Big Sisters of Sherman County, the Goodland Public Library, Harvest America, K-State, the Goodland School District, the Sherman County Farm Bureau Association, the Regional Prevention Center, the Goodland Arts Council, the Northwest Kansas Technical College, the Goodland Activity Center and City-County Recreation.

This year’s sponsors are Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Sunflower Extension District, the school district, Farm Bureau, the Regional Prevention Center, the library, the Technical College and the arts council.

The state grant helps to pay for Site Coordinator Wanda Schritter and aide Deb Mentzer to provide supervision for the kids.

Besides educational programs and demonstrations, the after-school program provides snacks and time to do homework.

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