

County to honor long-time workers for years on job

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**
Decatur County commissioners heard from a committee Tuesday morning which has been planning ways to recognize county employees for their years of service.

The committee, made up of Road Supervisor Tim Stallman, Clerk of the District Court Janet Meitl, Ambulance Director John Barrett and Sheriff Ken Badsky, suggested that employees receive a framed certificate and a small memento after the first five years of service and then at the 10 year anniversary, they would receive a plaque. The plaque would have their name, how long they had worked for the county and what department they are in.

Rick Doeden, who owns Custom Trophy, brought samples. He said that it would cost between \$19.50 to \$21.50 for each 10-year plaque.

To the side of the main engraved metal piece are four little metal pieces which could be engraved for each additional five years the person works for the county.

When the person retires, the wooden plaque would be attached to a stand, which Mr. Doeden said would be an additional \$20.

This idea would allow for those who work in two departments to be recognized for their work in both, said Mr. Barrett.

Sheriff Badsky said that the initial cost may be high, but after the first there will only be a small expense. Mr. Barrett agreed that there will be an initial cost, but said that they have had some who have worked for the county for many years who need to be recognized.

Commissioners Ralph Unger and Doyle Brown agreed that it sounded reasonable and that they needed to honor those who have been with the county for a long time.

They are planning an appreciation dinner at the end of January or beginning of February, probably on a Sunday evening since Friday and Saturdays are full with sports. They talked about having the event at the Golden Age Center and having it catered, but made no decisions.

Employees who have been with the county for five years and increments of five will be recognized.

Mr. Unger said that it may not work for service to be consecutive because

they have employees who worked in the county for years and then took a month or so off and came back. He said that they need to know what the rules are going to be and Mr. Brown agreed.

The committee will be back at Tuesday's meeting to finish discussing plans.

In other business, commissioners:

- Heard from Mr. Unger that a constituent had stopped him to ask about the property valuation for the county. He said that Steve Shogren, who will sell the bonds for the school bond issue, has been using a different figure than what County Clerk Marilyn Horn has. The incorrect number is giving a different view of what the taxes will do if the bond issue is passed. The commissioners looked at the school budget and said that it says on it the correct valuation for the district, which is \$25 million although that doesn't include the land that has been signed into the district here so the kids could go to school in Oberlin, but Mr. Shogren was using \$39 million.
- Talked with Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley, who said that the department has received its new computer and that it has several programs that will work for them, including ones that show their expenses and how many products they have used. He brought examples to the commissioners.

He said that he went to a district meeting and they elected a new president, who said something about wanting to increase the number of prairie dogs in Kansas by 1 percent.

Mr. Huntley said that they are going to have new federal requirements on how to store chemicals. He is waiting for the rules from the Environmental Protection Agency until he makes any changes.

• Appointed Brad Uehlin as clerk for Sherman Township and Jim Abbey as trustee and Denise Abbey as treasurer for Olive Township. The commissioners are still waiting of the party affiliation of Girard McKenna, who is the trustee of Lyon Township.

• Agreed to stay with the health insurance they offered last year through Corporate Plan Management in Topeka.

• Were reminded that they need to find a person to sit on the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Board.



NURSING SUPERVISOR PAM HARMON tried out a new piece of equipment with the help of Alan Loughry, with Vital Link Sales. The new monitors can test all of a patient's vital signs with their gadgets.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Hospital buys new monitors with money from sports night

Decatur County Hospital has received two emergency room monitors purchased by the hospital board with money raised at the sports benefit night.

The machines, equipped to measure all vital signs, arrived at the hospital earlier this month. They two machines have sturdy bases, with a pole reaching up to hold a white box. On the front of the box are screens with red numbers that tell the oxygen level, blood pressure, temperature and other signs of the patient.

Alan Loughry, with Vital Link Sales in Scottsbluff, Neb., delivered the machines and showed staff members how they work. He said that one of the good things about the machines is that you can take just one type of vital signs. For instance, if you just need that person's blood

pressure, a nurse could set it that way, or they can set it on automatic and get everything at once.

The machine can be used on both children and adults, said Mr. Loughry. It can read a person's blood pressure through clothing, even a snowmobile suit. The machine can be used in the emergency room or in an ambulance when they are moving patients, he said, and it won't pick up the bumps in the road.

Nursing supervisor Pam Harmon said that they will use one of the machines in the emergency room and one on the floor at the hospital.

She said she liked them because they were sturdy enough that they could be moved around without tipping over and could be used for emergencies.

Agency wants money for study

The Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission is asking \$1,000 each from area counties to look at the feasibility of putting dairies in this area.

Last Tuesday morning Randy Hrabe, executive director of the corporation, talked to the Decatur County commissioners about the program. He said that they will use the money to draw up a strategic plan. He said Decatur County is probably a good location, because it has the space to make a large dairy work.

If a dairy is built here, he said, other counties would be able to grow and sell alfalfa, for example. He said that Rooks, Trego, Ellis, Norton and Phillips counties have all agreed to put up the \$1,000.

Mr. Hrabe said that they will then contract with a man from St. Louis, Mo., who knows the dairy industry, to do the study. The idea is that if they can get a number of dairies concentrated in a 100 to 150 mile radius, then they can start a processing plant for ice cream or cheese.

A new dairy operation opened near Breton, in Thomas County, last year with support from economic development officials there.

Commissioner Doyle Brown said that they hadn't decided about the \$1,000, but did suggest that Mr. Hrabe talk with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. and Connie Grafel, who is the marketing director for the corporation. Mr. Brown said that as he understands it, if a county doesn't put up the money, it probably won't be considered for anything.

Council OKs amendment

The Oberlin City Council approved a \$4,651 amendment to the city budget Thursday night for the grass that has been put in at the city baseball fields.

The council met for 25 minutes, taking care of a few minor matters.

Members agreed to pay \$71,511 for a new bucket truck out of the 2000 budget.

They held a 15-minute closed session for attorney-client privileges. There was no action taken.

Preliminary hearing off

The preliminary hearing scheduled on Tuesday afternoon for Joan Faye Evans was postponed.

Officials at the clerk of the district court's office were not sure when the hearing would be held.

On Thursday, Dec. 21, Mrs. Evans was charged on six counts of aiding an escape and unlawful sexual relations in incidents which allegedly occurred at

the Sappa Youth Ranch from April 3 to June 9.

Mrs. Evans, 55, was charged with two counts of aiding in the escape of Todd Lloyd and Robert Prebble from the ranch on June 9 and four counts of sexual relations with Prebble, who was 17 at the time. She was released on a \$15,000 personal recognizance bond.

Youth allegedly had grass

Oberlin Police officers stopped a young man before Christmas on the corner of Cass and Commercial and arrested him for possession of marijuana.

Austin Mitchusson, 17, from Texas received a summons after the Dec. 23 incident ordering him to appear in court here.

Officers made an arrest on Dec. 12

after Brenda McCullough, 30, allegedly was caught shoplifting a spice can from Raye's Grocery. She was issued a citation to appear in municipal court.

On Dec. 4, Mona King, 20, called officers to report that a pair of blue jeans and about 36 compact discs were missing from her apartment on Garfield Avenue.

Clock waits on repairman's visit

There has been no time or temperature on the sign above Commercial Federal Bank at the corner of Penn Avenue and Commercial Street since the city lost power on Dec. 18.

The power surge caused the sign to

go out, and they are now waiting for a repairman to fix it. Officials at the bank said that the electrician should be here within the next two weeks and they hope to repair the existing sign instead of getting a new one.

Workers discover burning towels

Workers at the Oberlin Sinclair and A&W smelled smoke around 10:30 Monday night and called the fire department.

Firemen said the smell came from a bag of towels that had just been laundered. The cleaning chemicals used on the materials didn't mix well and sent off a smell which was questionable.

Fire Chief Bill Cathcart said that there weren't any actual flames inside the building, but once they took the bag of towels outside it spontaneously combusted.

Although the bag and cleaning towels burned, he said, there wasn't any other damage.

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State has money for loans

County will give out cash to businesses

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

Decatur County commissioners signed an agreement with the state for a \$100,000 Community Development Block Grant last Tuesday. They will use the money for a "microloan" program to boost small businesses.

Randy Hrabe, executive director of the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission in Hill City, met with the commissioners and Connie Grafel, marketing director of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., to get the process going so that they can start giving the loans.

The microloans can be given out to businesses that are starting or creating at least one new job, up to \$15,000, said Mr. Hrabe. At least 15 percent of those loans have to go to low or moderate income people, he said, but that when they first start it may be a little more difficult because the recipients will have to be in that income level.

Ms. Grafel said that she has already heard from six people who are interested in the loans, although she doesn't know if they will all qualify.

The grant agreement between the county and the state was looked at during the meeting by County Attorney Steve Hirsch. The agreement states that the county has to take the proper measures to collect the money and has to submit semi-annual reports on the loans.

After the agreement is signed, Mr. Hrabe said, they need to set up a committee that can look at the loan applicants. He said that in other counties, the group consists of a commissioner, two business people, a banker and one other person. At a past meeting, commissioners agreed on a possible board, although they need to still talk to those people.

Then the regional commission has to start working on what Mr. Hrabe called "environmentals," a letter that is sent to state agencies which talks about the loan process in Decatur County and gets their reaction. He said that takes about 30 days.

"The quickest we are looking at getting the microloans out is 45 days," said Mr. Hrabe, "but we are probably really looking at 60 to 90 days."

Ms. Grafel said that she would like to get the process going as soon as possible and Mr. Hrabe said they would start the environmentals.

Mr. Hirsch had a few questions on the agreement and with the answers, Commissioner Doyle Brown signed it so that work could start.

He asked how the loans work with the state Open Records Act. Mr. Hrabe said that the names of people who apply for the loans are open, but the financial records of that person or business are closed. Mr. Hirsch also wanted to know if the notes are owed to the county, which they are.

Mr. Hirsch said that it seemed to be a potential problem because the county doesn't normally loan out money to people. Mr. Hrabe said that the county wouldn't run that money through the general fund, but there would be a special savings and checking account.

People here won't see any of the money until after the loans are approved and the county actually asks for money from the state, said Mr. Hrabe.

Oberlin Business Alliance Winners of the Christmas Drawings:

- Estella Waldo - \$500 Scrip Money**
- Audra Duncan - 1/2 beef** (donated by Dec. County Feed Yard Processing donated by Grinnell Locker) and a freezer
- Norma Anderson - Whole Hog** (processing donated by Ben-Lee Locker, Atwood)
- Anthony Marshall - \$50 Scrip**
- Children's Toys - Dillion Schurr**

The Oberlin Business Alliance would like to acknowledge and thank all the members for their support for all of the promotions throughout the year 2000:

Addleman Drug Store, American Legion, Warren Bainter, CPA; City of Oberlin, CMA Distributors, Commercial Federal Bank, Culligan Water Conditioning, Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Decatur County Feed Yard, Dollar General, Duckwells, Fair Chiropractic Clinic, Farmers Bank & Trust, Frontier Motel, Good Samaritan Center, Gold Banc Insurance, Gold Bank, Goodstar Broadcasting, Hansen Plmbg. & Heating, Hirsch & Pratt LLP, Janey's Frontier Restaurant, KSNK TV, LandMark Inn, Lund Law Firm, Nor'West Newspapers, Oberlin Medical Arts, Oberlin Ribbons (Jack Benton), Pauls Funeral Home, Prairie Petals, Raye's Grocery, R & M Service Center, Rocking R, Southwest Implement, Stanley Hardware, The Bank, The Dresser, Times Past, Ward Drug Store, Connie Grafel, John and Muriel Ready, Charles Frickey, Gary and Janell Walter, Ruth Laidig, Wilma May.

Thank you to the following for their support of special projects throughout the year:

Oberlin Milling Co., Oberlin Livestock Auction, Shaw Aerial Spraying, Decatur Co-op, R.J. Metcalf Real Estate, Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, Home Planning Center, Doris Black, L7 Ranch, Teens For Christ, Maverick 4-H Club, Decatur Title & Abstract Co., Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, Oberlin Rotary Club, Grinnell Locker, Ben-Lee Processing, Oberlin Jaycees, Star Valley 4-H