

## Census shows 13.7 percent loss in county

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Decatur County was second only to Graham County for the biggest population loss in the state over the last 10 years, according to official U.S. census numbers released last week.

Numbers show that since 1990, Decatur County has lost 13.7 percent of its population, going from 4,021 people to 3,472.

The drop did not come as a shock, since preliminary census numbers in November showed the county had lost 76 people from 1998 to 1999.

Oberlin schools have been hit by the decline, but the district shows preliminary numbers for

next year's kindergarten class to be five more than what they will graduate this year.

The city of Oberlin has shared in the decline. In 1980, there were 2,387 people in the city limits but now there are 1,852 according to the city office's last count. This means 535 people have moved, died or left.

Mayor Gary Walter said it is always a concern when the population dwindles. He said the segment of the population which is decreasing is what he called the "material working class," people over 30 and under retirement age. The "advanced youth" and people over retirement

age are groups which are getting larger, including people who no longer have children in school and have already spent years working.

The younger population moves away and aren't coming back to live, work and raise a family, he said.

The mayor said the city is trying to work with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. to promote the area and bring in jobs to retain people. Mayor Walter said the city is trying to bring in younger people who will take jobs and promotion.

Last year, the development corporation con-

tracted with a Colorado firm called Tekquity to find out if a technological business would fit here and to help put together a strategic plan. In a public meeting, people here said their No. 1 goal was to bring young families into the county.

Mayor Walter said he has heard it is less expensive to live in Kansas than in Nebraska and thinks the development agency should put together numbers to help bring in people who commute this direction to work at Cabinetland, Sappa Valley Youth Ranch and other places.

The younger generation doesn't have any

objection to driving 30 minutes to work, he said, and if promoted properly the city could try to attract those people.

Another thing which may help keep people in town and increase the population is to promote local businesses.

"I think there is a lack of appreciation for small town stores," said Mayor Walter. "There is also a lack of knowledge of what it really costs to drive to McCook to buy the same item which you can buy in Oberlin."

He said that cost includes the extra items you (Please see CENSUS on Page 8A)



WITH BOTTLE IN HAND, Dr. Mark Olson fed a calf (above) Sunday afternoon at Countryside Veterinary Clinic. The calf, belonging to the Kevin Schiessler family, had been brought in Saturday after being stepped on by its mother. Christopher Schiessler (below) asked Dr. Olson to make sure the calf didn't die. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

## Winter weather taking big toll on cows, calves

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Drought last summer and wet, cold weather the last few months have made this calving season the worst in the last seven years for area stockmen.

"This calving season weather wise has been the toughest on baby calves since 1993," said Dr. Mark Olson, owner of Countryside Veterinary Clinic. "Mother Nature between the wind, moisture, snow, rain and ice, including the early cold weather in January and February, has really stressed the calves."

Calving usually starts the first of January and goes for about another month, said Dr. Randy Leska, owner of High Plains Veterinary Clinic. Cows are pregnant for about 283 days, plus or minus 15 either way.

With the weather, the length of time it takes a cow to give birth has

increased, making the calves weaker at birth, he said.

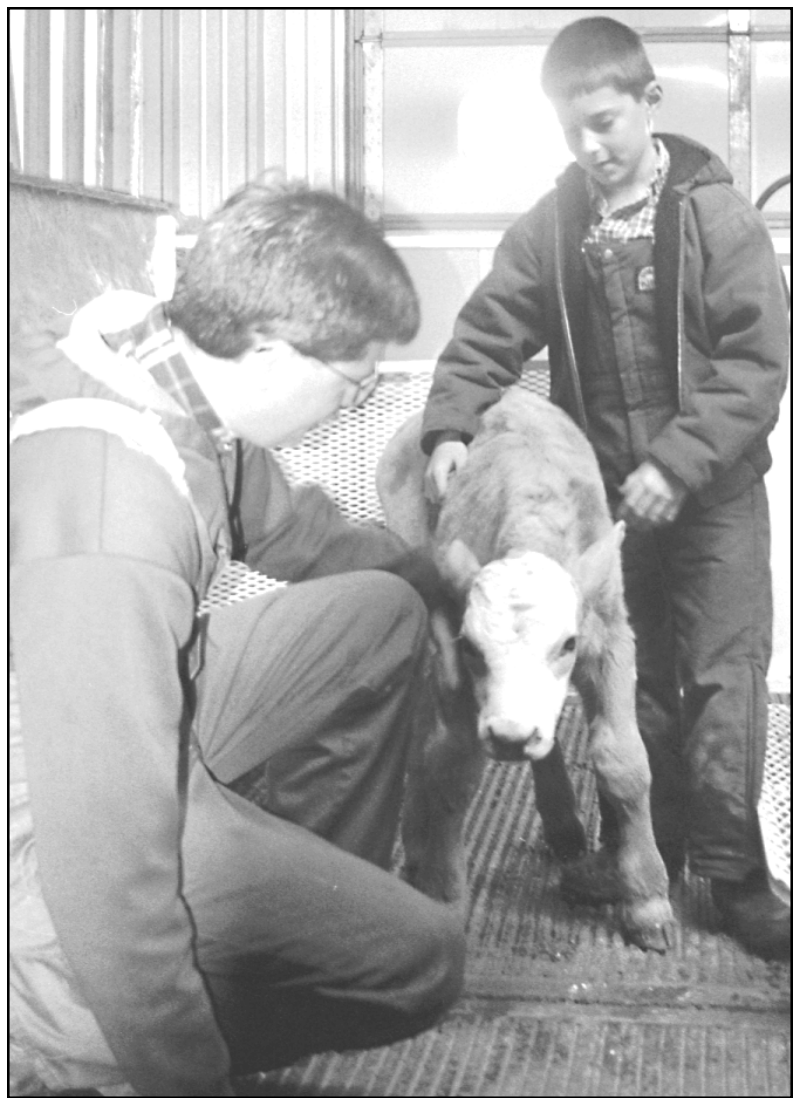
The weaker the calves are, the lower their immune system is, said Dr. Leska. Kansas State University is calling it weak cow syndrome, resulting from the longer births and weaker calves.

"The cattle we have this year are weaker by the middle of March than they were last year as a general rule," Dr. Leska said.

Dr. Olson said they have seen a substantial loss in calves compared to last winter, as high as 30 percent on calves born to this point.

Deaths are attributed to the longer birth but also the dry conditions last summer. The drought which burned wheat and corn crops throughout the county produced lower-quality feed. Dr. Olson said cows were stressed and didn't always get the minerals and vi-

(Please see CALVES on Page 8A)



## Clerks help send kids to college

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Decatur County Clerk Marilyn Horn, a former kindergarten teacher, is leading a statewide committee which will give out scholarships from the Kansas State County Clerks.

Mrs. Horn, who spent 10 years teaching kindergarten in Denver, said she signed up about three or four years ago for the committee and this year she became the chair.

Mrs. Horn is in charge of collecting all the applications for the state and then making copies of them and sending one to the 11 committee members, who make the selection.

The clerks will give out the seven scholarships this year with money the clerks received from the news election service for calling in results for national elections.

(Please see MONEY on Page 8A)

## On the air again



OLDIES AND ADS were played and read during the Oberlin Rotary Radio Day at KFNF on Sunday. Rusty Addlemann (left) and Doug Fair were among members of the club who worked two-hour shifts on the air. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

## Lenora students will go to Norton next school year

Jennings High School will play sports without students from the Lenora High School next year since the Lenora School Board decided to close its high school and send its students to the Norton School District.

Lenora Board President Dane Edgett said the school contracted with Norton because of enrollment numbers. There are only 10 kids in junior high and 15 at the high school. She said the educational opportunities are better in Norton, along with technology, classes and extra-curricular opportunities.

She said the larger school can offer some classes which Lenora can't. By contracting the students to Norton, Lenora will keep a local school board, and depending on what happens in the future, the district holds the right to bring the kids back and educate them

in Lenora. The grade school will remain open.

Contracting means the Lenora students will be in Norton and no longer play sports with the Jennings teams. Superintendent Dave DuBois at Jennings said the school has been making arrangements to play without Lenora. He said Jennings will have enough students to continue playing football, volleyball and girls and boys basketball without the Lenora athletes.

The students will return to the Western Kansas Liberty League instead of the Cheyenne Conference, which they have been playing in with the Lenora students.

Mrs. Edgett said students in Lenora have already started to be included in activities in Norton. For example, (Please see LENORA on Page 8A)

## Volunteers trained to spot tornadoes

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Warm weather and sunshine are just around the corner, and with them storm season. About 27 Decatur County people learned about those storms last Tuesday night and became spotters for the National Weather Service.

Spotters learned about different types of storm cells, dangerous weather, how to call in what they see and when to call. The new spotters left with a four-digit number which they can use to identify themselves when they call.

Kevin Lynott, a meteorologist with the weather station in Goodland, led the training. He said storm spotters help tell forecasters what is really going on in the area of a storm. Although high tech weather equipment can tell forecasters when there is a potential storm or if the clouds have rotation, meaning there may be a tornado, he said, they can't actually see what is happening in the field.

Mr. Lynott said there are four types of storms which produce damaging wind: squall lines, bow echoes, microbursts and supercells.

A squall line can be more than a hundred miles long, he said, and can produce hail and weak tornadoes.

The bow echo is a smaller version of the squall line, said Mr. Lynott, and looks like a boomerang. It can cause tornado-like damage.

A microburst can produce winds up to 100 miles per hour and can damage planes flying under the storm, pushing the aircraft to the ground.

Super cells are the strongest and last the longest. These produce most tornadoes, he said.

There are three types of supercells, he said, the classic, high precipitation and low precipitation. With the high precipitation cells, often the tornado is wrapped in rain, making it hard to see. With low-precipitation storms, there is hardly any moisture.

Not every storm which the weather service asks spotters to call in create tornadoes, but some do. Mr. Lynott said on the High Plains, many of the twisters look like an elephant's trunk, long and slender.

"One nice thing about High Plains (Please see SPOTTERS on Page 8A)

## Ranch hires director with law background

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

With a background ranging from law officer to case worker to horse wrangler, Dennis Allison started work as director of the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch last month.

Mr. Allison lives in Rexford with his wife Vicki. Before moving to Rexford, Mr. Allison said, he worked in Hutchinson, Colby, Scott City, Garden City and Estes Park and Grand Lake, Colo. Along the way, he has been a police officer, undersheriff, teacher, Juvenile Justice Authority case worker and dude-ranch wrangler.

In the 1960s, Mr. Allison said, he started in law enforcement as a police officer in Garden City, and then left to work at the Scott City Police Department. Later, his travels took him to Hutchinson, where he was the undersheriff for seven years.

The undersheriff was named by the sheriff, who at that time held office for only two years at a time. Knowing that

if the sheriff wasn't re-elected, he would be out of a job, Mr. Allison said, he took night classes at Hutchinson

Community College for two years in criminal justice. He then went to McPherson College, where he received his bachelors degree in criminal justice.

After his time in Reno County, he started teaching at Hutchinson Community College and was working toward a master's degree, which he completed.

Mr. Allison later took classes at Kansas State University for a doctorate, driving two nights a week to Manhattan. He said he had taken the preliminary tests and written three chapters of his dissertation when he stopped because he was going through a divorce.

Colby Community College no longer had a criminal justice program at that time, said Mr. Allison, so he moved there to start the program again. (Please see DIRECTOR on Page 8A)



Dr. Allison

# \* Calves lost due to stress from weather

(Continued from Page 1A)

amins they needed. One theory is that the quality of feed lowered the vitamin A and E which the cattle were getting compared to last year, said Dr. Leska, but no one knows for sure. Also, farmers started to feed cattle on corn stalks early because grazing wasn't available. The weather burned the corn stalks before they could reach their full growth level, concentrating nitrates in the bottom of the stalks. The nitrates may have helped weaken the calves, depending on the time between when the cows were taken off the stalks and birthing, said Dr. Olson. After the calf is dropped, they may be placed in a stressful situation with the wind chill as low as it has been and the cold, wet moisture, including the snow, rain, ice and fog. "Overall, weather conditions were so extreme this year that it pulled on the cows," he said. "The weather stressed them." Dr. Olson said when it is warm out, the calf has a chance to adjust to the environment. With the weather the way it has been through this season, though, the calves aren't getting that adjustment period. For veterinarians, this means that more of the newborns are being brought into the clinic. Dr. Olson said Country-side has had to warm up more calves and do more intravenous fluids for

strength. With the muddy fields, the vets have also had to assist with births more than normal. "I would say that the calving difficulty is the same," he said. "It is after the calf is born that they aren't as strong or vigorous, and that is related to the weather from clear back to last summer." Every calving season, farmers run the risk of dealing with winter weather. Dr. Olson said the No. 1 reason farmers calve in February and March is because they aren't farming then. Planting and harvest haven't started and people have the time to spend with the calves. Also, the animals make it to market at a good time. "When you have a winter like this," he said, "everyone is wondering why they do it." Although Dr. Olson said he encourages people to calve later in the season, it doesn't always work with time management and being in the field. "The encouraging part is that cattle prices are up and calves we have kept are tough," he said. Calving will continue for another month, regardless of what Mother Nature brings. Dr. Leska said anything which adds comfort to the cow may be able to help the mother and baby make it, whether that be providing a better environment such as rolling out hay, better feed or more tender loving care to the calves.

# \* Spotters will be eyes for weather service

(Continued from Page 1A)

storms is you can see them for many miles," he said. There are six levels of twisters, determined by the damage they cause and how long and wide a storm's path is. Generally, an F0 produces winds from 40 to 70 miles per hour, an F1 from 73 to 112, an F2 from 113 to 157, an F4 from 158 to 206, and F6 from 207 to 260 and a F5 is anything higher than that. "If an F5 hits a largely populated area, it looks like an atomic bomb has hit," said Mr. Lynott. "It destroys everything." With thunderstorms which produce a lot of rain, spotters need to watch for flooding, too. Sven Nelaimis, with the service, said in cases where there is

flooding, people need to remember to move to higher ground. He said if a road is covered with water, don't try to drive through it because you don't know if there is a road left under it. Spotters also had the opportunity to talk with a man from the Red Cross. Mr. Lynott told spotters to not get out of their comfort zones, to make sure they are safe where they are watching a storm. He said just because they have spotter numbers, it doesn't mean they need to go storm chasing. Last year, he said, about 43 percent of spotted tornadoes came from spotter calls from the general public. Mr. Lynott said this year his goal is 50 percent.



**HARD AT WORK**, County Clerk Marilyn Horn searched for information at the courthouse. Mrs. Horn is chairperson for a committee to decide who will get scholarships from the state clerks association. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

# Sappa shelter house will receive new roof in spring

Two Saturdays in the spring, April 28 and May 5, have been scheduled to re-shingle the Sappa Park Shelter House. The Sappa Park Restoration Committee met March 6 and agreed to order the shingles after they received permission from the Oberlin City Council last month. Jack Benton, chairman of the committee, said at the last council

meeting that the shingles have been ordered and will be in by spring. Although the committee raised enough money for the shingles through donations and fund-raisers, it still needs donations for nails, sheeting and other roofing supplies. Mr. Benton said the group will order 70 squares of shingles at \$85 each. He didn't want to say

# Looking for a bingo



**STUDYING THEIR CARDS**, Dakota Soderlund (right) and a friend waited for the chance to win one of over 100 prizes Friday during the Prairie Heights Teachers Association Scholarship Bingo night. The soup supper and bingo brought in about \$775, which will go for scholarships to this year's seniors or past graduates. — Herald staff photo by Jeanette Krizek

# \* Census shows decline here

(Continued from Page 1A) pick up which you don't need, the gas money and other incidentals. If people knew that, he said, they may stay in town. Connie Grafel, marketing director for economic development corporation, said part of the decline in the county is that we are losing some of the older population to death and aren't bringing in the younger families yet. She said there are jobs here, and people need to be found to fill those positions. The agency plans to continue to work on telecommunications with Tekquity to see if that could help pull in younger families, she said. The jobs have to come first and then the people, she said, and part of providing jobs is making sure they are higher paying ones which young families would need to move here.

At the strategic plan public meeting, people said they wanted to bring young families in to town and to provide day care and recreation for them. Ms. Grafel said before those things can happen, we have to have the people because of financing, basically meaning to bring in new businesses which will create the jobs people have to be willing in put the money up to start them.

the school is working on making it a smooth transition. Since the two districts are different sizes, Mrs. Edgett said the schools have never been rivals and for years, kids from Norton have invited those from Lenora to school dances and socials.

# \* Lenora students contracted out

(Continued from Page 1A) cheerleader tryouts will be this month and the Lenora girls have been invited. The school will try to arrange something so the Norton student government can walk the students through the building so they are familiar with it

before the fall term starts. The kids will take a bus to the larger school, a 20 minute-drive. After the decision, she said, some kids said they want to go to school in Jennings and others haven't said anything. Parents have been supportive and

the school is working on making it a smooth transition. Since the two districts are different sizes, Mrs. Edgett said the schools have never been rivals and for years, kids from Norton have invited those from Lenora to school dances and socials.

# Health Fair planned here in April

The Decatur County Health Fair will be held on Friday, April 20, at The Gateway Arena in Oberlin. Health information booths and activities will include hearing and vision screenings, eye glasses adjustment and

repair, organ donation information, air-life helicopter from Kearney; water testing; blood pressure checks; highway patrol demonstration; "Convincer" crash simulator (weather permitting.)

Screenings for osteoporosis with bone density machine will also be available for a \$10 fee. All other screenings are free of charge. Blood will be drawn from 8 to 10 a.m. on April 2, 3 and 4, and participants may discuss results with Nurse Practitioner Jonna Inman at the health fair on April 20.

# \* Money for clerks' job given in scholarships

(Continued from Page 1A) The applications are available at the county clerk's office and at the high schools in the county. A student can be a high school senior or freshman or sophomore in college with at least a 3.0 grade point average. The form asks for a hand-written essay, official transcripts and two letters of reference. The deadline is April 1, said Mrs. Horn. She said the clerks have about \$8,000 this year which has been paid to them for calling in national election results to the News Election Service and from money the group has raised. There will be seven scholarships given for \$500 each, for students interested in majoring in journalism, political science or communication. "We want people to go to college," she said, "and the news service wants them to major in journalism, political science or communications."

instead of the 14. After the deadline, Mrs. Horn said, the 11 committee members, who are county clerks from all over Kansas, will meet in Salina to make the selections. Mrs. Horn said she asks each member to bring a list of their top 10 choices and then the group sees how many of the same names are on those lists. The committee then narrows the choices down to seven students. On May 3-5, the county clerks will hold their annual meeting, where the scholarship winners will be announced. Mrs. Horn said the clerks and the five election officers who attend the meeting bring an item from their county for a silent auction. Last year, Mrs. Horn said, she brought a pin made by Karen Metcalf from the Dresser. This year she hopes to maybe do the same thing and take something from Spring Creek Castings, too. For the past 18 years at least, the clerks have received the money from the news service, said Mrs. Horn, but they have decided to raise money for the scholarships outside that program also. There are no guarantees, she said, on how long the county clerks will get the election money.

Mr. Benton said the committee is still looking for organizations that would cook a meal free of charge. He has gotten a commitment from the Girl Scouts to serve tea and lemonade and the Cub Scouts to help with the re-shingling. "For anybody who wants to show up, we will find something for them to do," he said.

# Nursing program to be offered at Colby Community College

Colby Community College is offering a comprehensive education program in nursing. The satellite campus at Norton offers

the entire curriculum for the Licensed Practical Nursing program, which can begin after high school graduation and may be completed in one calendar year.

Those who stop after the first year will be eligible to write for the Practical Nurse licensing exam. For students who desire a two year

plan of study, the second year prepares the student to take the Registered Nurse licensing exam and receive an Associate Degree in Nursing.

# \* Director jumps in feet first

(Continued from Page 1A)

That was in 1989 and he became the director and stayed there for 10 years. While in Colby, he finished his doctorate in criminal justice management from LaSalle University. With 10 years at Colby, Mr. Allison said, he was eligible for early retirement. For a summer, he went to Colorado to work for Sombrero Ranches, which he said runs between 1,500 and 2,000 horses. Sombrero runs stables throughout Colorado and had been out recruiting students from Colby when he picked up information on it. Wranglers are trained in Estes Park, where he started, but he was transferred to Grand Lake to run the stables at the lodge there. Mr. Allison said he tries to go back each summer to ride. Returning to Kansas, he became a case manager for the state Juvenile Justice Authority. Mr. Allison said he worked closely with the kids and often had to place them outside their home. The job ended when his younger sister, who lived in Hutchinson, was diagnosed with cancer and he took care of her until she died. Living in Rexford since November 1999 and being involved with juveniles and the law, he said he knew about Sappa Valley Youth Ranch and had heard there were some openings. He decided to apply for a position and was interviewed with personnel from the WaKeeney Juvenile facility, also operated by Kelley Youth Services. Mr. Allison said when the man saw his resume, he told him he needed to apply for the director's position. He started in the job on Feb. 19, jumping in, he said, feet first to take over the facility, which has been dogged by high staff turnover, state budget cuts and a sex scandal. "I feel comfortable with it," said Mr. Allison. "I know there are problems which have to be addressed and rumors which have to be squashed, so to say." As the director, he said, he tries to spend as much time as possible in the houses with the boys and eats lunch with them. Mr. Allison said he has an open-door policy with the boys and the staff. On Monday, he said, the ranch staff was scheduled to start full-blown training for both new staff and existing employees. In a month, he said, he thinks the ranch can catch up with the WaKeeney facility in staff size and stability. "I feel comfortable with what I'm doing," said Mr. Allison. "I know what can and can't be done."

The director said he has three children, Mitchell, Michael and Deedra, from a previous marriage. His wife Vicki has four from a previous marriage, Chad, 21, Rebecca, 17, Kristin, 13 and Jami, 11, all who live at home.

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