

Winds, rain slash county, cause wreck

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Winds gusting 60 to 80 miles an hour whipped across the area Friday night, blowing a thousand-foot irrigation pipe into the two passing vehicles on U.S. 83.

No one was hurt, though the occupants of a van and a car were shaken, and the van's windshield was shattered.

Another wave of storms hit the area early Sunday, downing power lines, knocking down tree limbs and dumping 2.5 inches of rain. The runoff brought Sappa Creek to bankfull and nearly filled Sappa Lake.

Friday, the driver of the van, Kevin Baker, Grand Island, Neb., was with his wife Christine and their three kids, all under age 5, on their way to a relative's house in Colby.

The Bakers were southbound on U.S. 83 while Jerold Slack was driving north in a two-door Toyota, near Kevin Wurm's farmstead, about 13 miles south of Oberlin.

Mrs. Baker, who was in the front passenger seat of the van, said she saw the pipe coming and bent to the side. Sheriff's Deputy Gary Baldwin said if she hadn't done that, the accident could have been tragic.

The National Weather Service in Goodland had warned that the winds were supposed to hit the Oberlin area at 5:30 p.m. that night. Not moments after the clock struck half past 5, a dust cloud filled the air. People who were outside went in and peered out of windows.

The Selden ambulance was dispatched to the accident site, which was first thought to be at the intersection at U.S. 83 and K-383, but the family had already pulled into the Wurms' driveway to get help.

The pipe caused minor damage to Mr. Slack's vehicle. Both drivers were able to pull into the farm. There were no injuries and the children acted like nothing unusual had happened, said Deputy Baldwin.

That evening, the area received a trace of rain, but nothing significant. Saturday, temperatures reached into the 70s and conditions were favorable for thunderstorms by the morning, said Senior Forecaster Scott Lockhart, with the weather service office in Goodland. The county was placed under a severe thunderstorm watch, which changed to a warning as the weather started to

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THE PLASTIC MAN (above) smoked a cigarette, demonstrating to Jeremy Chase, Jared Marcuson and Shelby Wolters (left to right) toxins from second-hand smoke. Marci Metcalf (below) signed a thank-you to the American Heart Association. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt



Kids see dangers of smoke

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The clear plastic box sat on the edge of a cement wall outside Oberlin Elementary School, filling with smoke while a plastic head attached to the inside held a lighted cigarette in its mouth.

The box had a fan opposite the plastic head which pulled the smoke out and through a piece of cotton which acted like a filter. The brown stuff which was trapped in the cotton is what you get from second-hand smoke, Casandra Stallman told the kids.

She said the box came from the American Heart Association and students got to keep it all week. The smoking education, she said, ties into their lessons on drug, alcohol and tobacco.

The other item Mrs. Stallman got from the association was a model which showed students what smoking would do to their lungs. It has a little plastic head and clear plastic lungs.

A cigarette was placed in its mouth. (Please see SMOKE on Page 10A)

Backers to hold meeting at gym

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Two public meetings to tell people about the Oberlin School District bond issue have been set up, the first at the elementary gym at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and the second at the high school auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Members of the KIDS committee promoting the bond issue decided that if they had the meetings at the schools, people could see for themselves what needs to be fixed.

Before election day on June 5, said chairman Rusty Addleman, owner of Addleman Drug, they should have at least one more meeting.

Don Fredrickson, co-coordinator of the speakers bureau, said he would like to see tours given during alumni weekend at both schools. Teacher Brenda Breth said the student council already does tours at the high school.

Mr. Fredrickson said the bureau has started to schedule talks for clubs and organizations in the county.

A "bullet sheet" which some members thought was finished at their last meeting was handed out with revisions. Mrs. Breth said she took the original

and tried to make it easier to read. The sheet includes figures of what people would pay for the bonds. Members rewrote some parts which they thought could be confusing.

Mrs. Breth asked everyone to take the sheet home to read one more time and make sure all of it works. She said she still thinks there is too much information on the sheet.

Mr. Addleman asked that everyone get the changes to Mrs. Breth before the next meeting.

With voter registration deadline on May 21, only a month away, Kristin McHugh, co-coordinator of the registration committee, said she has picked up cards for people to register with.

Gary Walter, co-coordinator of Ways and Means, said the group has written a letter to give accurate information to people and ask for their support. He said in the letter, they aren't telling people how to vote but giving them the facts. He said they will start by sending the letters to teachers and people who have expressed interest in the bond issue.

The goal is to raise \$3,000.



A CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS gang was shingling the Sappa Park Shelter House the first time when this picture was taken. Shown are (from left) Huber Post, unknown, Bill Walters, Leslie Walters, unknown, and Foreman George Thummel. — Collection of Leslie Walters

Volunteers to shingle old shelter house

The Sappa Park Shelter House will get a new roof Saturday, with volunteers tearing off old shingles, putting down felt and new shingles to protect the historic old building for years to come. Work will start at 8 a.m.

The shelter house was built in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps, which hired young men to do public projects during the Depression. It was used as a bath house when there was a swimming lake at the park. The building is equipped with bathrooms and a large picnic room. After the lake dried up, uses for the shelter houses have

changed. Now groups are able to rent the house out and in the summer it is used to shade people during festivals.

Over the years the roof has deteriorated, and in 1987 a group organized to raise money to fix the house up and work on getting water back in the lake bed. The group has raised, mainly through donations, \$7,000 to \$8,000 for the project.

Jack Benton, with the committee, said he has ordered the shingles and they should be in before Friday.

Mr. Benton said the committee is asking for volunteers. (Please see SAPP on Page 10A)

Officials advised to keep it open

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

"Openness is the rule, not the exception" was the theme in a presentation by County Attorney Steve Hirsch to nine county officials Tuesday morning on Kansas laws making public meetings and public records open to the public.

In a computer presentation, Mr. Hirsch taught county officials open meetings and open records laws, conflicts of interest and the incompatibility of office doctrine. Mr. Hirsch said he hoped to give the same presentation to the city councils in the county and

both school boards.

To start with, he said, the law regards any agency which is supported in part or whole by tax dollars as public. For example, he said, the county is a public agency because it is supported solely by tax money. The Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. is a public agency because it gets money from the city which comes from the taxpayers. Essentially, he said, public agencies belong to the people and they have the right to check up on what they are doing since the agencies run

with their money.

Register of Deeds Judy Gaumer, Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley, Commissioners Ralph Unger, Pat Glenn and Doyle Brown, County Clerk Marilyn Horn, Treasurer Jean Hale and Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman were all in attendance.

Mr. Hirsch said there are some exceptions to the open public meetings rule, but closed meetings (called executive sessions) can only be held for a few reasons. Those reasons include discus-

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'Body' under bridge a doggy mystery

A passerby reported a body under a bridge a mile south and a mile west of town, wrapped in a blanket, covered in cement and looking like a possible homicide.

Sheriff Deputy Gary Baldwin said he received the call after dinner on Sunday. Arriving at the scene, he said, he started to take pictures.

"My initial reaction when I saw it was that it resembled a body," he said. "You couldn't tell."

He called Undersheriff Randy McHugh to take pictures while he moved the cement out of the way. Just in case it was a crime scene, he said.

After moving the cement, Deputy Baldwin said he pulled the blanket up

to find a dead dog. He said he thinks the dog died over the winter and the ground was too hard to bury it, so the owners did their best they could.

Deputy Baldwin said the owner must have been someone who really cared for their pet. He only wished they would have notified the sheriff's office, adding that frankly, he was relieved to find that it was just a dog.

Outside of Jennings around 4 p.m. Thursday, Robert Givens, 16, somehow ended up with his car on the wrong side of a wire fence without the fence being broken.

Deputy Baldwin said Mr. Givens was driving to Oberlin to go to work. Judging by the tire marks, he said, the

car slid sideways for 129 feet then went off the road, hitting the bank twice, and somehow ended up on the west side of a wire fence pointing southwest.

County Weed Director Gaylen Huntley found the vehicle, then drove the road and found him. Mr. Givens refused Mr. Huntley's offer to call the sheriff or an ambulance. Mr. Huntley gave the Jennings youth a ride home and then called the sheriff.

Later that day, Citizens Medical Center in Colby called Decatur County to ask if they knew about the accident, since they had the victim there.

Mr. Givens was given a ticket for not driving at a reasonable or prudent speed and not giving notice of the accident

* Firm offers to advise development board for fee

(Continued from Page 1A) he said, he doesn't know, but he said it is cheaper to hire a company which has several areas of expertise than many different experts. Anyone in the public who thinks that for \$25,000 already paid to Tekquity, the board would get a business is wrong, said Mr. Lohofener. That was for the strategic plan. The firm is not in the venture capital business as a lender, he said. They have access to a venture capital fund, but Tekquity does the leg work and gathers information. The reason they have backed off is because their investors want to see a return of 10 times in two years.

"What I would like to see out of this is a business in town which hires people and is profitable," said Mr. Steele. "The last thing I want to see is a business come in and fail, but I don't know if \$500,000 is possible." Mr. Lohofener said the board has already said it will be difficult to raise the money and he doesn't know how much money outside or inside the community would be possible. Member Vickie Bailey said she knows it isn't something the board members can do themselves but she doesn't know where to look other than Tekquity to get help. "I think our community needs to stop and ask

what we are going to do," said Mr. Lohofener. "Do we want to try this or a shoot off of this?" Mrs. Shobe said she thought the group needed something more concrete than this to go to the investors with. Mrs. Bailey said she thought Tekquity needs to know how much money is raised first and then they will know what business can be tried. She said it is a Catch 22. Member Alan Marietta said at this time the most important issue is finishing the strategic plan, which Tekquity gathered information for. Then if want to try to organize to raise half a million, he said, they can. "If we can't raise the money," he said, "it is

over, but we still have a strategic plan, so we haven't wasted anything." The plan is needed so the county can apply for grant money and also to help attract new businesses. Mrs. Shobe said she felt Tekquity didn't do a good job of gathering information for the plan. She said she felt some of the questions on the survey were loaded and didn't see the information as global (the whole county). She said that they only held one public meeting and she thought they had to hold more. The group has to have two more meetings on the plan. Ms. Grafel said Tekquity did several inter-

views of businesses in town but the development only got information from three or four of them. The group agreed they could ask for the other interview results. Mr. Marietta said he would also like to ask for any raw data Tekquity gathered. Mrs. Bailey said she would like everyone ready to make a decision by the next meeting so if they choose to pursue a technology business like a call center or incubator here, they can start to work on it. Ms. Grafel said in the meantime the group needs to start asking people if they would put money into the project to get a feel for what might happen.



WITH OVER TWO INCHES OF RAIN over the weekend, parts of Sappa Lake (above) filled with water, making a place for several ducks to spend the day on Monday. Sunday morning, the city

line crew repaired lines and power problems like this one south of town, where mud made it difficult to work. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

* Storms dump rain in wake of big wind

(Continued from Page 1A) move in. Late that night and early Sunday morning, lightning flashed and thunder could be heard throughout the area. In Norcat, hail was reported at 4:36 a.m., Mr. Lockhart said. City Foreman Dan Castle and the line crew was called out to fix power lines. Mr. Castle said Sunday while he was south of town working on a line that the guys were out during the night and luckily at least two of the times, the rain had let up some, although the crew had to fight the bad weather to fix lines. That same night, while Decatur County slept, an F4 tornado struck Hoisington, population about 3,000, south of Russell. Sirens never sounded, though spotters were out, and one man was killed. Volunteers were in the city by the next morning assessing the situation, finding survivors and then boxing up belongings and finding people places to stay. The tornado was as wide as four to six blocks and its path was a mile long, destroying 200 buildings and damaging more than a quarter of the town, including two schools and the hospital. This spring has been more active with thunderstorms than normal, said Mr. Lockhart. He said the weather service has already issued 70 types of warnings since spring started.

In the past couple weeks, there have been two strong low pressure storms which have been right over our area, he said. The first caused a blizzard which dumped 17 inches of snow on Denver, and the second caused the storms this weekend. It has been a unique situation for those in the center in Goodland, he said. The center issues watches and warnings for Decatur County based on what radar shows, and often what storm spotters here see. This weekend there were no storm spotters out, he said, but the county did remain under a watch or warning for almost the entire day on Sunday. As the line crew continued to fix electrical problems caused by the storm, trying not to get stuck on the muddy country roads on the outskirts of the city, the area was under a thunderstorm watch, which later turned to a tornado watch and then back to a thunderstorm watch. Mr. Lockhart said a watch means the conditions are favorable for either a thunderstorm or tornado. When one is issued, he said, people need to pay attention to the radio or television and be alert to what is happening because a watch can quickly turn into a warning. For a warning, people in the area need to find shelter, he said, a safe place to stay out of the storm.



Even though the spring has been more active than normal, he said, it isn't a sign of a worse summer than normal. It only means that the conditions have been optimal for the storms so far.

* Smoke boxes teach kids the dangers of cigarettes

(Continued from Page 1A) and lit. The smoke filtered through the lungs just as it would in a smoker. There was a clean piece of cotton in the lungs. After the cigarette was smoked, the cotton was brown, darker than the cotton showing second hand smoke. Mrs. Stallman hung the cotton in plastic bags outside her classroom on the second floor so other students could see what smoking does to your lungs and what being around people who smoke can do. Also in a plastic bag outside her room are the remains of smokeless tobacco, brown and soupy. Mrs. Stallman said by the time students are in the fifth and sixth grades, they are making decisions on whether to use tobacco or try alcohol. Some are starting by then, she said. "They are constantly making deci-

sions," she said, "and I want them to have the information before. Hopefully, we are catching them in time." Outside her classroom, signs made by the class say that the smoke from cigarettes stinks and is bad for you. At the age of 10 or 11, she said, the students know smoking is bad for you, putting carbon monoxide — and the brown gunk — into your lungs. Mrs. Stallman

told them carbon monoxide is the same poison which comes out of a car's tailpipe. Although there is no machine to demonstrate what smokeless tobacco does to a person, one boy said chewing gives you mouth cancer and your teeth fall out. He said it says "caution" on the can because chewing can cause mouth cancer, but people still use it.

Mrs. Stallman asked her class if smoking or chewing tobacco is worth it? The kids all chimed in "No!" Both the fifth and sixth graders were working on a thank-you poster for the American Heart Association for loaning them the machines. Each wrote a special note about what they learned and why they won't smoke or chew.

Herndon schools get technology grant

Herndon school will be receiving a \$17,500 technology grant for the school year 2001-2002. The district applied for three Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grants and will be awarded one for participation in the Gen Y Program.

Herndon will be using the program to integrate technology and Internet resources into the curriculum. It will focus on the districts Quality Performance Accreditation target areas: math problem solving, reading comprehension, and writing communication.

Goals of the program are to provide hands-on opportunities for students to enhance curriculum materials using technology, provide teachers an opportunity to learn how to integrate technology into the classroom efficiently and effectively and to gain experience with current technology.

* Sappa Park shelter house to get new shingles

(Continued from Page 1A) to help on both Saturdays, with painting the shelter house, working on the grounds and crawling on the roof to tear off and replace the shingles. He said there will be something to do for everyone who shows up. On the first Saturday, he said, they will start on the middle section, which doesn't need much trim work so the felt can be put on right away and people can start putting shingles on. Later, other groups can work towards the outside of the building. Mr. Benton has said the project is similar to an "old-fashioned barn raising," when people used to come from miles around to put up a farmers barn, visit and eat. Food will be provided by the Business and Professional Women, who will be making sandwiches; the Girl

Scouts, who will provide tea and lemonade; and the Lions Club, which is offering cookies. Mr. Benton said they are still looking for donations to fix up the restrooms and put in camper hook-ups. They can be sent to Box 231, Oberlin, with checks made out to Sappa Park Restoration Committee.

Students will develop their own web pages to directly reflect curriculum objectives and also develop other resources such as PowerPoint presentations, spreadsheet applications, professional word processor documents, and multimedia presentations aimed at the curriculum objectives and assessment targets. The classroom teacher will guide the student but will also learn how to integrate technology into the curriculum in different ways.

* Law makes most public data open

(Continued from Page 1A) sions involving attorney-client privilege, non-elected personnel, private financial information, and preliminary discussions on acquisition of real property. In the case of client-attorney privilege, he said to remember that the agencies' lawyer must be present. After stating the reason for the session in a motion, the length of time and who will be present, and approving it by majority vote, members may go behind closed doors. Anyone in the session can take notes, he said, but those become public record once the doors are open. Mr. Hirsch said it is common for agencies to come to a consensus during a session, but members are not allowed to vote behind closed doors. Penalties for violations can include each member paying a \$500 fine for each offense. With the changing times, agencies have to be careful about conversations over e-mail, said Mr. Hirsch. For agencies where two is a quorum, then an e-mail between the members is an open record and can qualify as a meeting. According to an attorney general's opinion, he said, electronic "meetings" don't have to be interactive or even in real time. He said to remember to try to be open. If you interact over e-mail or get a call at home, he said, disclose that information, don't try to hide it. There are even more exceptions for public records, said Mr. Hirsch. Recently County Treasurer Jean Hale had a call from someone requesting a list of all the delinquent taxes in the county.

He said she did a good job and followed the open records law, sending out a letter telling the requester what the charges would be since, agencies are allowed to put reasonable charges on the copies. Like the open meetings law, he said, there is a \$500 penalty for each violation but it is paid by the governing unit, not the individual. He said people often overuse the term conflict of interest as a reason to not discuss a topic. Mr. Hirsch said the only time the term should be used is if the person has financial gain from the outcome. In a situation where you feel it is a conflict, he said, a member should excuse himself from the discussion or even from the room and definitely should not vote on it. He said not to confuse conflict of interest with the incompatibility of office doctrine. The doctrine is basically why the county treasurer can't also be the clerk, he said; it is a checks-and-balances system. You can't sit on a group which is your boss, for example, a county employee can't be a commissioner. Elected officials can still sit on boards as long as there isn't a service-agent relationship. Mr. Hirsch said enforcing the rules can be tough in rural Kansas. A city council member may be selling the city a service or the weed director may sit on the county commission. He said in those cases, it is important to disclose everything, be up front. The county officials agreed the class was a good refresher for most of them. Mr. Hirsch said to remember for both laws, the key word is "open."

Bell gives \$100,000 for students

Southwestern Bell Foundation will give a \$100,000 gift to establish an endowed scholarship fund for students studying information networking and telecommunications at Fort Hays State University. It is part of the university's Centennial Campaign. Plans are to offer one \$1,000 schol-

arship from the earnings on the fund for the 2001-2002 school year. After interest has been allowed to accrue, several scholarships will be awarded in the 2002-2003 school year. Potential students may learn more about the scholarship by visiting <http://www.fhsu.edu/int/>.

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