

Incoming class the biggest in years

Oberlin kindergarten enrollment is high for next year but still doesn't cover the number of seniors graduating in May.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said the enrollment numbers came in high, then went down and then settled at 40 students, 24 boys and 16 girls. That includes 14 students who will ride the bus to school and 26 in town.

Mr. Glodt said he is happy with the numbers. The downside is that 44 seniors will graduate in May, leaving a loss of four students.

The thing is, said Mr. Glodt, there is no way to know for sure what students the district may gain.

He said he has heard rumors about some students from Herndon deciding to come

here, but those haven't been confirmed. He also doesn't know yet if any families will be moving out of the district.

Currently, there are 30 students in kindergarten and 11 in developmental kindergarten.

With the enrollment numbers, said Mr. Glodt, that would make next year's kindergarten class the biggest in the grade school.

The first grade has 27, second grade 28, third grade 24, fourth grade 29, fifth grade 33 and sixth grade 37.

Mr. Glodt said the district hopes that a class of 40 students isn't a one-time deal and that instead it is a trend for the future, but he doesn't know if that will happen.

Just this last year, the district took a hit of 51 students, a drop of nearly 10 percent.

From the 1999-2000 school year to the 2000-2001 year, there was a drop from 32 students.

Still, the drop last year was the largest in recent years.

"We are proud of the fact that the district hasn't had to cut any programs," the superintendent said. "We are convinced that will help us bring in more kids of all ages."



A LINE OF ANXIOUS YOUNGSTERS (above) broke and headed for the candy at the annual Easter Egg Hunt at City Park on Saturday. Before things got busy, mothers like

Pat Brown and her daughter Skyler (below) talked to other participants and their parents.

— Herald staff photos by Steve Haynes

Little hoppers hit the candy-egg trail

By STEVE HAYNES

They stood, leaning forward, stretching, hopping, jumping, false-starting, moving back behind the line.

And then someone started again. Jack Benton cried, "Wait." But it was too late.

The stampede for the last Easter candy was on, and the 7- and 8-year olds were making way too much noise to hear anything.

Or see anything but candy. Tyler Bruggeman was a blur, jumping from spot to spot, trying to stay ahead of the pack, snatching a Robin's Egg here and a candy fruit slice there.

Forward, no, I missed one, back, to the side, bump another kid. He hopped right out of the camera frame. Just a blur.

Things had actually been pretty quiet until then at the Oberlin Lions Club's annual Easter Egg Hunt.

The Easter Bunny was work-

ing the crowd, handing out candy, which was provided by the Mountain Slope Masonic Lodge.

Then, little kids lined up to be judged in their Easter costumes. As it happened, they were all bunnies this year. Then the older kids took their turn, and finally, the oldest bunch, with decorated Easter baskets.

Then it was time for what everyone came for — candy.

The Lions wisely separate the kids into three groups, based on age and rambunctiousness.

First came the 3- and 4-year olds, just toddlers. They were quiet and intense, serious, unsmiling, with great sense of purpose. Moms, sisters, grandmas, babysitters, whoever was handy, guided them to the goodies. They snatched up each piece and placed it carefully in their baskets.

Except, of course, for the one or two who just opened the first one. (See CANDY on Page 8A)



Moisture gives wheat a drink

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The rain last week came just in time to give the wheat crop a drink and provide some moisture for upcoming corn planting.

Traditionally, dryland corn planting starts this time of year. Farmer Gerald Olson, west of Oberlin, said he plans to get started soon. In his area, he said, they received .90 of an inch of rain.

The rain is encouraging, Mr. Olson said, but the area is going to need more to get a good crop. Mr. Olson said there are areas which received more rain, including Rawlins County, which got 2 1/2 inches. Oberlin received .74 of an inch.

Mr. Olson said he will probably start planting the first of May, although some farmers may start earlier.

With corn, unlike wheat, fertilizer is either sprayed beforehand on the field or is put in when the seed is drilled. Mr. Olson said he has already put fertilizer where he plans to plant dryland corn.

The timely rains have helped his wheat fields, he said.

"I'm pretty optimistic about my

wheat," said Mr. Olson. "So far, I think it looks real nice and the rain has helped. If the area can get another couple inches before harvest time, it will be a nice crop."

He said he thinks the crop so far is better than he harvested last summer. The wheat has a little over two months before harvest. Mr. Olson has been farming for 41 years.

In Norcat, it rained a little more, with anywhere from an inch to 1.30 inches.

Janice O'Hare, assistant manager of Norcat Grain, said the recent heat had started to show on the wheat crops, but the cooler weather and rain came just in time to change that. The crops look excellent now, she said.

Farmers are saying they will most likely start planting corn this week. Mrs. O'Hare said it is 50-50 on whether farmers are going to fertilize when they plant or when they are finished.

The rain will make a start for the corn, she said, but the subsoil moisture is still short. The area needs more rain to produce a good crop, she said.

Health fair offers chance at check up for little or nothing

It's time to head to The Gateway to find out about healthy living during the fifth annual Decatur County Health Fair on Friday.

The event opens at 10 a.m. and will run through the afternoon, closing at 3 p.m.

County Health Administrator Marilyn Gamblin said the fair offers a little of everything this year. In past years, the fair has drawn everyone from school children to senior citizens.

This year, it shouldn't be any different with the wide selection of booths for people to obtain information.

One of the big attractions for the fair comes from Kearney, Neb., an emergency helicopter that flies in

and lands in the parking lot at The Gateway. The helicopter has flown in for the fair the last two years but both times, either didn't land or landed and then had to take off right away.

One of the big health informational items many will receive at the fair is results of their blood work.

Last month, Ms. Gamblin drew blood from 157 people for the tests.

The blood work costs \$25 and includes tests for electrolytes, kidney and liver functions, alkaline phosphate, glucose, cholesterol, triglycerides, hemagram and TSH. Men had the ability to add the prostate specific antigen test for an extra \$20.

(See BLOOD on Page 8A)

High contract costs bother school group

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The community facilities advisory committee, although quiet for the last few months, has been working steadily on research and plans for building improvements in the Oberlin School District.

Dr. Mark Olson, spokesperson for the group, talked with the school board Monday night to let them know the group is still working.

The original plan was to go to the community with a survey after the first of the year, he said, but that didn't happen because the group got numbers from general contractors and decided to challenge them.

Basically, he said, the numbers received from D&D, the firm with which the district has a contract, were higher than the other contractors the group had contacted. The numbers for renovation troubled the committee, said Dr. Olson, because they were based on square footage of the buildings. Those estimates, he said, included windows, plumbing, electrical and other items, all based on square footage, from contractors from outside the area. He said it seems the local contractors don't base the numbers on square footage.

Although the committee has received some figures, Dr. Olson did not bring those to the board meeting.

The group asked for an electrical study by D&D, which was done. Dr. Olson said they didn't realize the district would be charged \$12,000 for that.

The group decided to challenge the numbers provided by D&D because of the differences. Since then, D&D has said it will step down as general contractor on the project. Dr. Olson said the district to get a letter on that.

He said the committee wants to spend wisely to fix the schools for years to come. He said the committee's coordinators met last week with a general contractor out of McCook who put some numbers together for them and they are planning to have that contractor met with PBA Architects.

Dr. Olson said when and if the board decides to make any improvements, this contractor wouldn't be guaranteed the project. He said it should be put out for general bids.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said there was a 3-1 difference in some of the prices. He said he talked with Alan Milbrandt with PBA and he agreed that D&D is more like a contract manager and not what was needed with the project. Mr. Glodt said he called the contractor and told (See SCHOOL on Page 8A)

Wind wreaks havoc with jewelry sign

A gust of wind around 6 a.m. last Wednesday was just enough to tear the north third of the facade off the Ray Jewelry building.

Vicky Ray said Jack Metcalf, who has a real estate office across the street, heard the front come off the building and called.

The wood was in the street for a good part of the day, as the wind

continued to blow and the rain fell, since the insurance company had to take a picture of the damage. Ms. Ray said after that was done, contractor Wayne Golt picked it up and is going to salvage what he can to fix the front. She said she was shocked the whole front didn't go.

There were some gusts that were in excess of 50 miles per hour, said

Emergency Preparedness Director Bert Cool, and the wind was at a solid 45 miles per hour.

The wind storm was caused by low-pressure along southern Kansas which brought the winds up, said Meteorologist Jeremy Martin, with the National Weather Service office in Goodland. At the service, wind gusts were reported from various

areas. The highest was 71 miles per hour in Flagler, Colo., 67 miles an hour in Colby, 64 miles an hour in Trenton, Neb., where a semi-trailer truck blew over, and 66 miles an hour just outside of Goodland.

Although storms are normal this time of year, said Mr. Martin, the low pressure system was extremely

(See STORMS on Page 8A)

Rural school districts highlighted in special

Inside this week's edition of *The Oberlin Herald*, readers will find a special section on northwest Kansas schools and how they are facing shrinking enrollment and a shrinking state budget.

The edition, produced by all the papers in the Northwest Newspaper group, focuses on the benefits and problems of small schools, the history of some of the districts, transportation issues, land trans-

fers, cooperative agreements, consolidation and what legislators are trying to do for — and to — rural schools.

Schools that are covered in the issue include Brewster, Cheylin, Colby, Edmond, Densmore, Gem, Golden Plains, Goodland, Herndon, Jennings, Lenora, Logan, Norcat, Northern Valley, Norton, Oberlin and St. Francis.

Power glitch pulls plug on parts of town Monday

Parts of Oberlin lost power Monday afternoon when a surge arrester on the main transformer went out.

City Foreman Dan Castle said that he wasn't sure why the arrester gave out, but it blacked out quite a few areas in town for about 30 minutes, he said.

The city lost the 2,400-volt section, he said, putting out the electricity in the southeast, southwest and northwest — including the power plant.

how long the power was off, since the clocks at the plant quit when it went out. However, he estimated 30 minutes.

"I'm just glad there wasn't anything wrong with the transformer," he said. "If that had happened, we'd be generating."

The power plant has the capacity to generate enough electricity for most of the town at this time of the year, but usually it's cheaper to buy power. The plant runs when demand peaks most summers.

Mr. Castle said he wasn't sure

* Candy grabbed by wild bunch

(Continued from Page 1A) sat down and started eating. By the time they were done, though, there was not an egg or a slice in sight.

Then came the 5- and 6-year olds. They were smiling, having fun. They needed a lot less help, and made a lot more noise. But they played by the rules and waited for the sound of "go" to race out into the grass at City Park.

And finally, the older kids. Most of them acted like the last thing they needed was more sugar. They had to wait, and they were ready.

Their starting line inched forward, then back. Once they were off, there was no stopping them.

And as quickly as it had begun, the

hunt was over. The candy was gone. And the Lions were left to clean up the shelter house. There was a chill wind, and no one was hanging out.

Here are the results of the pre-hunt contests:

Age 1-2: Zoe Ruppe, Castle Rock, Colo., granddaughter of Annette Miller.

Age 3-4: Kaitlyn Slinker, Oberlin, daughter of Kevin and Tabitha Slinker.

Age 5-6: Aaron Cressler, Oberlin, son of Jonathan and Anna Cressler.

Age 7-9: Jordan Baxter, Smith Center, granddaughter of Jackie Votapka.

Each winner received a \$5 A&W gift certificate.



CREWS FROM WAYNE GOLTL CONSTRUCTION Jewelry's building on Tuesday night and also move barriers that had kept traffic out of the area. —Staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Storms are normal in Kansas in spring

(Continued from Page 1A) strong.

Before the wind started, the area was hit with a thunderstorm last Tuesday afternoon. The skies turned gray, and winds brought up moisture from the south, said Mr. Martin. The service didn't receive a lot of damage reports, but did get re-

ports of nickel-size hail and 60 mile-an-hour winds.

Normal weather for this time of year in Goodland is a high of 63 degrees and a low of around 35 degrees. Mr. Martin didn't have numbers for Oberlin.

For the last few weeks, the area has had wildly varying tempera-

tures. In Oberlin, thermometers reached into the 80s and 90s several days. Mr. Martin said the heat was caused by a large ridge of high pressure over the central plains.

With the hot days, there were a few records set: April 12 in Yuma and Goodland at 81 degrees, on April 13 in Goodland at 86 and Hill

City at 87, on April 14 in Goodland at 88 for a new high, Hill City at 94, Colby at 89, Tribune tied their record at 88 and Burlington at 86.

Over the next couple of weeks, said Mr. Martin, the temperatures are supposed to stay in the normal range and won't warm up beyond the upper 60s.

School board OKs purchase of new textbooks

The Oberlin School Board decided to order textbooks that are scheduled to be replaced this year at their meeting Monday night, although the superintendent will meet with teachers to be sure just the essentials are ordered.

Someone suggested that the district not order textbooks this year to save money, but the consensus of the board was if they don't approve ordering books, the district would get behind and pay more in the end. The district budgets about \$40,000 each year for textbooks.

Fourth-grade Teacher Steve Cullen brought books currently used by the students to show to the board members.

He said most of the textbooks that need to be ordered are for the junior high and high school. Fourth through sixth grades could make it with the current books for another few years, he said. Books would then be ordered every seven years.

School countdown

At a meeting last Monday night, the Oberlin School Board:

- Decided to order textbooks as scheduled this year but asked the superintendent to work with teachers to get rid of any frills. Story to left.

- Approved the re-employment of all the teachers at the high school, grade school and Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. Story to come.

- Heard a report from three student council students from the high school about their trip to Washington. Story above right.

- Received a report from the community facilities advisory committee which, although quiet for the last few months, is still working on research for the building project. Story on Page 1A.

Grade schoolers aren't as hard on the books as older students, he said.

Board Member Dan Wasson asked how many changes there are in five years. In some subjects, there are a lot of changes, said Mr. Cullen; in others there aren't as many. For example, English and grammar don't have a lot of changes, but social studies can have a lot.

The teachers at the junior high and

high school said that if there are things that don't need to be ordered, they would like to be able to pick them. Mr. Cullen said it isn't something the teachers have to know right away.

Board Member Barb Olson said she didn't want everything to pile up and create more of an expense later.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said he would contact other districts to

ask about book-ordering cycles. He recommended that the board let him and the principals sit down and work out a new cycle but he said he didn't think that the district should take a year off of ordering books.

It is in the budget for the district to order books, he said, and it should be done. He said he would meet with the teachers and make sure there are no frills being ordered.

Interrelated Classroom Teacher Rhonda Barth said she thinks that special education needs are going to be taken into consideration. She said she does use some of the past textbooks for references.

Mr. Cullen said he had talked to teachers about getting the sample books for the kids at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch.

The board decided to table actually ordering the books, but gave the go ahead for the forms to be filled out. The board will look at the orders at the May meeting.

* School board negotiates with contractor on prices

(Continued from Page 1A) him the situation and the firm asked to get out of the contract. The contractor said to consider him and the district even. Mr. Glodt said he believed the district paid the firm \$11,000.

If things go well, said Dr. Olson, the committee should be able to come back with a recommendation some time this summer.

At that time, the group plans to

do a random survey of every fifth voter. The survey will be sent out and then the committee members will pick them up.

Board Member Dewayne Jackson said after the recommendation comes in, that at least some of the committee members will stay involved in the process. It will be important for them to work through the bond issue election and on planning after a bond issue passes.

* Blood work offered at fair for small fee

(Continued from Page 1A) Jonna Inman, nurse practitioner from the Oberlin Clinic, will be at the fair to go over the results.

There will also be bone density scans for \$20, which tests for osteoporosis.

Booths at the fair include:

- Oral cancer screening by Tammy Vavroch from a dental office in Oakley.

- Hearing tests by Stevens Hearing Center of McCook.

- Pam May with parents as teachers.

- Bruce Winder with Herbal Life Nutrition.

- Decatur County Health Systems, Cottonwood Home Care and Cedar Living Center.

- Decatur County Stand Against Violence.

- Relay for Life.

- High Plains Mental Health of Norton.

- Hospice Services of Oberlin.

- Valley Hope Rehabilitation from Norton.

- Decatur County Drug and Alcohol Council.

- Weight Watchers of Oberlin.
- The YMCA from McCook.
- Lifetime Eye Care.
- Northwest Local Environmental Protection Group out of Colby.
- Apria Health Care out of North Platte.
- Good Samaritan Health Systems from Kearney.
- Decatur County Farm Bureau with Freddie, the Combine.
- Kansas State Research and Extension and the Decatur County Extension Office.
- Mary Kay consultant.

- A nutrition booth with Lisa Votapka and Jennifer Juenemann.
- Decatur County Good Samaritan Center.
- Decatur County Fire Department.

The Oberlin Lions Club will be selling food over the lunch hour to raise money to help students going to state band camp this year.

The fair, said Ms. Gamblin, is a good time to ask health questions, some of which a person may forget to ask while at the doctor's office.

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Arbor Day Proclamation

Whereas, In 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees and

Whereas, this holiday, called Arbor Day, was first observed with the planting of more than a million trees in Nebraska, and Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation and the world, and

Whereas, trees reduce the erosion of our precious topsoil by wind and water, cut heating and cooling costs, moderate the temperature, clean the air, produce oxygen and provide habitat for wildlife, and

Whereas, trees are a renewable resource giving us paper, wood for our homes, fuel for our fires and countless other wood products, and

Whereas, trees in our city increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas, and beautify our community, and

Whereas, trees, wherever they are planted, are a source of joy and spiritual renewal, and

Whereas, Oberlin has been recognized a Tree City USA by The National Arbor Day Foundation and desires to continue its tree-planting practices

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Gary J. Walter, Mayor of the City of Oberlin, do hereby proclaim April 25, 2003 as

Arbor Day

in the City of Oberlin, and urge all citizens to celebrate Arbor Day and to support efforts to protect our trees and woodlands, and

Further, I urge all citizens to plant trees to gladden the heart and promote the well-being of this and future generations.

Dated this 3rd day of April, 2003 Mayor, Gary J. Walter