

Spring rains green up lawns and fields

Overcast skies dropped .74 inches of rain last week, greening up lawns in towns and fields in the country.

The much-needed rain came just shortly after the area had received .90 of an inch of rain the week before. Although some farmers had been planning to start planting corn, the fields were too muddy last week. After more than two years of drought, most weren't complaining.

The rains started Tuesday night and continued on and off through Thursday evening. The slow, steady moisture into

fields and pastures, left giant puddles in town to drive through and kids to jump in.

According to figures in *The Oberlin Herald*, the area has already received 1.89 inches more precipitation than it did by the same time last year. At the end of April last year, the area had received 1.30 inches and this year the area has 3.19 including the rain last week.

Meteorologist Steve Rubin, with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said they don't have numbers for Oberlin or Decatur County, but the Goodland area had

received about half an inch above normal for this time of year.

Mr. Rubin said normal is 3.15 inches from January to the end of April and the area has already received 3.71 inches as of Friday.

In Decatur County, Ty Gerlits, with the Decatur Co-op, said he measured subsoil moisture at two feet the week before it rained and said he thought it probably doubled with the recent moisture. It is recommended that a farmer have at least three feet of subsoil moisture to plant milo and four to five feet to plant corn.

The area is in a lot better shape for milo although corn may be a little short. When a farmer plants and the profile is short it means the crops will need rain sooner. When it gets dry the crops eat through the subsoil moisture.

No matter how the subsoil profile looks, said Mr. Gerlits, the area is definitely going to need more rain for the growing season, but so far it is looking good. The rain not only helped the wheat crop and pastures, and fields for the upcoming corn crops, but may help save on water bills. Extension

Agent Byron Hale said residents should only water when it is needed. One way to check is with a screwdriver.

Mr. Hale said if the screwdriver can go in the ground two inches or more, the lawn doesn't need to be watered. If the screwdriver can only go in the ground an inch and half to two inches, it is time to water.

Trees are a little different, said Mr. Hale, but with the recent moisture, trees will probably be OK for the next three weeks. When it gets hot and dry, people will have to get the hoses out, he said.

Social services tries to explain closing of office

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Six representatives from the Hays office of the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Service were in Oberlin last Wednesday to explain how people will be able to get help even though the office here will close around Sept. 1.

Social Service Chief David Schmidt told those gathered for the public meeting at the American Legion that the Decatur County office and 15 others in northwest Kansas will be closing because there are fewer people out here who need the services, and there are fewer employees available to help them.

Despite a heavy rain, 16 from the Oberlin area showed up to question the visitors about the closing, including one woman who identified herself as a client.

"The agency determined that we needed to serve our customers a little bit differently," Mr. Schmidt said.

The department has lost staff in Hays, he said, and has had trouble keeping the small offices open. Up to 85 percent of those needing help live in 35 Kansas counties, he said. The Hays office oversees 21 counties, which makes up 22 percent of the state's area and 5 percent of the social services clientele.

The Rev. Barbara Pierce of Oberlin's United Church asked how the shift in staff will save money.

Mr. Schmidt says the change is not about saving money but about using staff better.

"Our intention is to bring our employees together at a regional center so we can do more work," he said.

Decatur County Commissioner Pat Glenn accused the agency of taking more population away from the rural areas.

"Our whole intent is to make better use of the staff we have," said Marilyn Brown, who handles food stamps and cash assistance programs from the Hays office.

"If you're going to be sitting behind a computer and use the Internet, why can't you do it here instead of Topeka?" asked Larry Ganje, ad-

What will happen next

Social and Rehabilitation Services offices in 16 of the 21 counties of northwest Kansas will be closed in a four-tier operation. The first group of four offices will close about June 1. The next group of four will go on about July 1. The third group — including the Oberlin office — will be closed around Sept. 1. The last group will be sometime after.

The 21 county Hays area stretches from Cheyenne County (St. Francis) to Smith County (Smith Center) and from Wallace County (Sharon Springs) to Russell County (Russell) with three counties, Rush (LaCrosse), Barton (Great Bend) and Pawnee (Larned), hanging off the bottom of the square under Ellis County (Hays).

Of these only Hays, Goodland, Colby, Phillipsburg and Great Bend will keep their offices.

The department will establish contact points in counties that no longer have an office:

Level 1 would be a place to put flyers, applications and phone numbers.

Level 2 would have all the above plus a phone available.

Level 3 would have all the above plus a private area that social workers could meet with clients.

The agency will have toll-free phone numbers for those needing help. Clients could also drive to the regional offices or handle their problems by mail or on the Internet.

ministrators of the Oberlin Clinic. "You send these people to Colby," Hospital Administrator (See OFFICE on Page 8A)

Burst of activities marks end of school

Including weekends, there are 23 days of school left in Oberlin, and just about as many activities.

Not including sports, it seems there are at least three school activities each week, most of them for students and parents.

High School Principal Charles Haag said this time of the year is busy because it is the culmination of the term. It is a time to celebrate all the achievements over the year while getting ready for commencement. At the same time, administra-

tors are registering kids and preparing for the next school year.

It is a busy time, he said, and that makes for long evenings away from home.

In the next month parents, teachers, grandparents, students and friends have the chance to attend:

- The fourth, fifth and sixth grade spring concert at 7:30 p.m. tomorrow night in the grade school gym.

- The fifth- through eighth-grade band concert at 7:30 p.m. Monday (See SCHOOLS on Page 5A)

Stretches of U.S. 36, 83 to be repaved by state

A stretch of U.S. 36 and U.S. 83 will be re-paved in April 2006 in a geometric project paid for by the Kansas Department of Transportation.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the project will run from a little past Neill Avenue to just past Crossroads Express on U.S. 36. It will include the intersection of U.S. 83, going just past Ampride to the north.

The city has applied to the Kansas Department of Transportation for the last four years for the "geometric improvement" project, but not until this year was it approved. Mr. Shike said the city found out just before the new year that the project had been approved.

The department will pay for everything on the project, except moving (See ROADS on Page 5A)



FIREMEN WORKED to get Aaron Stef's contaminated shirt off Monday afternoon (above) during a crisis drill so he could be sprayed off with fire hoses. Bayley Bryan's face (below left) was covered in blood from a mock explosion

in the chemistry lab. Tyler Cook (below right) took a turn under the hoses to get the sulfuric acid washed off of him. The crews took care of all 19 victims in a little over an hour.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

Students 'injured' in mock explosion

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Seventeen students and an infant were injured at Decatur Community High School on Monday afternoon when a chemistry experiment went bad and blew up.

Students had glass sticking out of their bodies and some were covered in blood.

During the explosion, students got sulfuric acid on them, and they had to be stripped after firefighters and first responders got them out of the building.

Those who could walk were helped over to the two fire trucks sitting parallel in the east parking lot of the high school, sprayed with two fire hoses and covered in black garbage bags before emergency medical technicians had the chance to help them. Other students were carried on stretchers and back boards to the decontamination area.

OK. The explosion wasn't real. It was a drill, a mock disaster in which all emergency crews in the county had the chance to get some training.

The exercise was initiated by the Decatur County Farm Bureau, and by the time everything was said and done touched the lives of many.

At 1:12 p.m., Sheriff Ken Badsy set off two flash-bang devices in the east parking lot of the school.

A 911 call was made from the school that there had been an explosion. A call came across the police radio that there were several casualties, there was sulfuric acid in the room and that emergency crews should enter the



school from Commercial Street.

In no time, Oberlin was full of sirens and the doors to the school had been locked.

All entrances to the parking lot of the school were blocked by police and sheriff's vehicles.

While the crews were outside preparing to go in, the school was locked down. Superintendent Kelly Glodt said the high school and the elementary school both went into a lock down until staff found out what had caused the explosion. Basically they wanted to find out if someone was in the school setting something off. Once the place was secure, the students were evacuated, avoiding the contaminated area. They were taken to the track.

By that time, it had been announced on the police radio that the explosion was in the chemistry lab on the second floor of the high school, there were several casualties, but the explosion was an accident, not caused by any outside person.

Firefighters worked together to get the students out in the safest,



quickest way. One team worked in the hot zone, right next to the door of the school and inside. Others moved students to the decontamination area and to the emergency medical crew.

The medical crew did triage, determining whether the students needed to go to the hospital by ambulance, or if a parent could take them, and how bad the situation was. Scott Teeselink, a retired KBI agent who now works with the Farm Bureau, said everyone did an excellent job in the drill. Mr. Teeselink, who had 31 years with (See DRILL on Page 8A)

* Drill teaches skills

(Continued from Page 1A)
The KBI, the Wichita Police Department and Shawnee County Sheriff's Office, said there were some things that hadn't been anticipated, but everyone stayed on task and got the job done. The crews did some pretty incredible stuff quickly, he said.

"You guys are a class act," the agent told the crews later.

The last victim of the drill was a firefighter who suffered heat exhaustion. Other firefighters worked quickly to get her cooled off and out of the heavy clothing she had on. They called for oxygen and carried her on a stretcher to the decontamination area.

The team players gave a brief talk to the students at the junior and senior high school after the drill.

Mr. Glodt said although the response was well planned, there were some things they didn't think about. He said the school called the crisis team from the elementary school over to help and told them to meet in Principal Charles Haag's office. They found the doors locked and no one to let them in.

Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy said the biggest problem he saw was a lack of people. He urged the students to sign up to be emergency medical technicians, first responders or firefighters.

He said they also ran short on equipment. Mr. Pomeroy said he feels comfortable working with every person in the group.

Fire Chief Bill Cathcart said they could call departments from surrounding areas for manpower if it had been a real emergency.

Sheriff Ken Badsky said in a situation like this, the whole team needs to be on the same radio channel.

Oberlin officer Scott Ziegler, who was at an entrance to the parking lot, said he only heard about a third of the conversations on his portable radio and only half in the car. He suggested using a base radio instead of the portables at the command center.

* Office here to close

(Continued from Page 1A)
Lynn Doeden said, "Where are they going to get their groceries, their health care.

"We're going to have more Duckwalls closing down. I don't want my hospital to close down."

Larry Smith, who said he was at the meeting representing

himself, asked what would be saved by closing the offices.

"It's not about saving money," said Stephanie Kramer, the Hays office administrative chief, who handles office personnel and the budget. "It's more about being able to provide the services in one place."

Byron Hale, Decatur County Extension agent, said that he was more concerned with people getting the services they need.

"I just think you don't really know who your customers are," he said.

American Legion Commander Gary Allen noted that the question was centralized versus decentralized operations.

"You can't improve your service to a community by putting all the baskets in one headquarters," he said.

"We haven't tried it," Mr. Schmidt said. "We don't know if it will work."

Mr. Smith said that centralization had been tried before, back in the '60s. Offices were closed and two women from Oberlin drove to the Norton office, which was kept open.

"It didn't work," he said. "You should have drawn on your past experience."

"It's a cost shift from state to local," Mr. Ganje added.

The bottom line, the agency group said, is that Oberlin does not have enough social service clients to warrant having an office. The two social workers from here will just have to drive to Colby, the next nearest office, to work.



DECATUR COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS worked to help a fallen teammate suffering from heat exhaustion during the crisis drill at the high school Monday. The firefighter, although hot from working, was just another mock victim. Crew members gave her oxygen and poured water on her forehead and neck.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Council to discuss request

The Oberlin City Council will consider a request for an extra payment to Miller and Associates to cover \$5,841 worth of inspection costs for the water project when it meets at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway.

Thaniel Monaco, with the McCook engineering firm, told the council at its last meeting that inspection costs for the project were \$5,841 over the contract amount and asked for more.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the next pay request for J Corp, the company doing the water project, will be in. He said there is some material left over, so the company is asking for a re-stock fee to send the materials back.

Tuesday night, the council scheduled a special meeting to deal with city health insurance. Mr. Shike said the council agreed to pay for the employee difference for April on the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan and now needs to decide what to do since the month is over. He said the city really has no other option but to stay with Blue Cross/Blue Shield for another month.

The meeting Tuesday was scheduled for 8:30 p.m. downstairs in The Gateway. The meeting Thursday night is also open to the public. It will be held upstairs in The Gateway.

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D. Schmidt

* Schools will be busy

(Continued from Page 1A)
 in the senior high gym.
 • The high school band concert at 8 p.m. on Tuesday in the auditorium at the high school.
 • Speech awards at 6 p.m. next Wednesday in City Park.
 • Fun day for grades 1-3 starting at 12:30 p.m. Thursday at the high school track.
 • Fun day for grades 4-6 at 12:30 p.m. Friday at the high school track.
 • The junior-senior prom Saturday, May 10. People can view the decorations at The Gateway between 6 and 7 p.m. The promenade on Main Street will start at 7 p.m., followed by dinner and dancing at The Gateway.
 • Music awards and a vocal concert at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 13, at the high school cafeteria.
 • Open house at the high school at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 13.
 • High school awards assembly at 2 p.m. Wednesday, May 14, in the auditorium at the high school.
 • Baccalaureate at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14, in the auditorium at the high school.
 • Last day for seniors on Thursday, May 15.
 • Graduation at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 18, in the Decatur Community High School gym.
 • Junior high awards and vocal concert at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, May 19, in the auditorium at the high school.
 The last day of school will be Friday, May 23, but that doesn't mean all the events are over. State golf and track competition will be held the week after school ends.

* Roads to be repaved

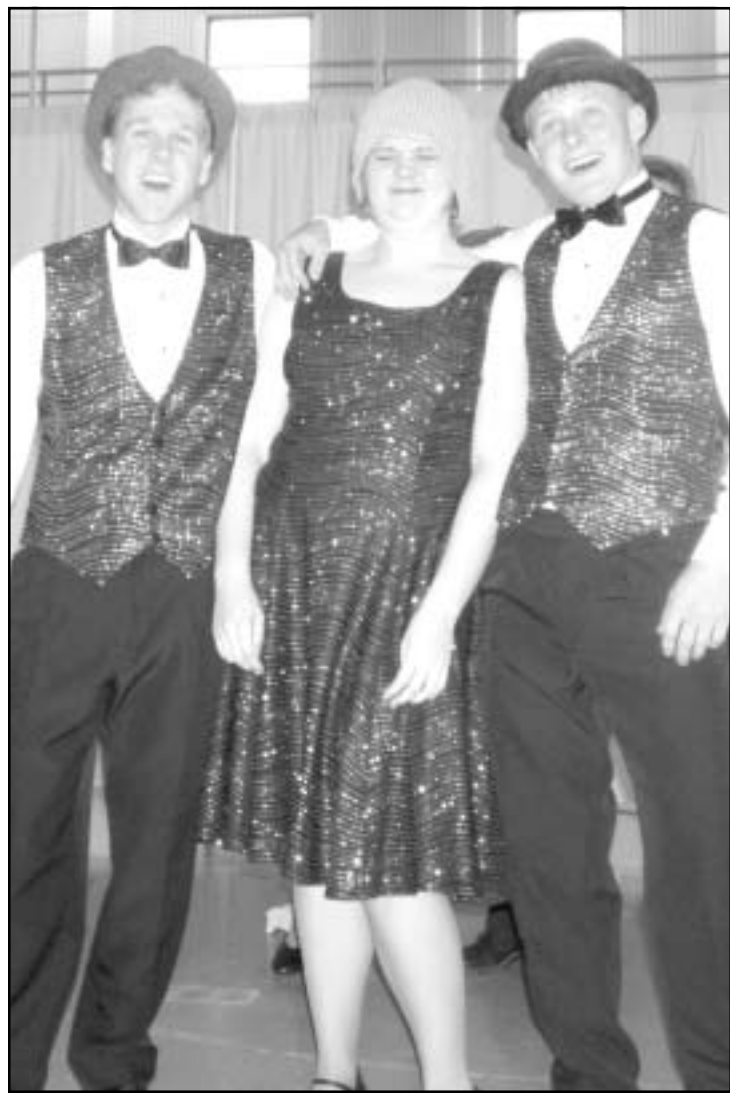
(Continued from Page 1A)
 ing utilities which the city does, said Mr. Shike. A project can't cost more than \$600,000.
 The city began applying for these geometric projects about nine years ago, he said, starting at the bridge south of town on U.S. 83. Mr. Shike said every project on U.S. 83 has been done through this program, including when the underpass was put in and traffic detoured around The Gateway.
 This time, the city had to send out at least five but no more than 10 letters to certified engineering companies. Of the six letters the council sent out, five of the companies sent letters back saying they were interested and one wasn't. Mr. Shike said the council will go over those letters Thursday night at its meeting.
 Normally, the state doesn't pay the engineering fees, but they are with this project, he said, which is why the council had sought proposals.
 The council also had to approve a code of conduct agreement which basically stated that none of its members would benefit financially from the project.
 The project, said Mr. Shike, is scheduled to be done in April 2006. Contractor selected will come in and tear up the roadway to grade, put in curbs, gutters and then re-pave the road. Concrete will be used to eliminate the problems of trucks wearing ruts in the asphalt when they stop and start up.
 The city has to have everything on its end of the project done by Thursday.



THE DCHS SINGERS ENTERTAINED at the annual Secretaries' Day luncheon on Wednesday. Some of their numbers required hats like those worn by (below from left) Chase Juenemann, Becky Moore and Matt Coleman. — Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes

Secretaries join for lunch, entertainment

The weather outside was frightful but the meal and entertainment were delightful at the annual Secretaries' Day luncheon last Wednesday.
 Sixty-four women enjoyed a lunch of chicken cordon blue, salad, herb-garlic potatoes and Oregon berry dessert catered by The Gateway staff.
 After the meal, the DCHS Singers came on to entertain and Ramsey Meitl sang a solo of a song she performed in Nashville.
 Each participant got a small decorative bird house as a party favor and Sharon Slabaugh of Ward Drug, received the door prize, a pair of Route 66 bird houses, made to look like a filing station and a travel trailer.
 The party was put on by the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce with Glenva Nichols, Chamber manager, doing the much of the work for the project.



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The Decatur County Landfill
Will Offer One Free Dump per family during regular hours from April 28 through May 3.
Weekdays are open from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Saturday, the 3rd, from 8 am. - Noon. The free dump can be used for business or residence but not both.

Limited to five (5) passenger tires.

Refrigerated appliances must have certificate of evacuation or will be charged a \$30 fee.

For more information call: 785-475-8111.

Remember the Free Compost available at the south end of the county shop east of town.

Storm spotter class set for 7 p.m. today

It's spring, and summer is almost around the corner, which means it is the storm season on the plains.
 The National Weather Service office in Goodland will hold an advance storm spotter training class at 7 p.m. today at The Gateway.
 The advance class will go into more detail on thunderstorm structure, including variations from one storm to the next. The class will also cover theories on why tornadoes form and what it takes for a tornado to develop.
 The class should last about two hours and 15 minutes. The service asks that people who want to attend the advance class have already taken a basic class.
 The session is free to the public.

Buildings given to foundation

The Decatur Health Care Foundation accepted a gift from a couple from Hays recently of a store front on Main Street and a duplex on South East Avenue.
 Patty and Joe Currey, who owned the store front which formerly housed Duckwall's and a duplex decided to donate both buildings to the foundation.
 The hospital board and management are discussing the possibilities for the property.
 The duplex will be listed with local real estate agents. The store front won't change hands until the middle of May, when the lease with Alco-Duckwall is over.

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 For Appointment, please call the RCHC Clinic - Atwood at (785) 626-3241

AUCTION

Saturday, May 3, 2002 • 10:00 a.m.
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SELLER: PHYLLIS MCKAY

<p>FURNITURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floral Recliner Blue Rocker Green Rocker Burgundy Fireside Chair Walnut Credenza Pole Lamp Table Lamps Computer Desk Computer Cabinet (4) Covered Chairs on Rollers Floral Couch RCA TV Extra Long Couch w/2 Matching Chairs Occasional Chair Lamp Shade Glass Lamp Folding High Chair Wicker Bookcase Floor Lamp Lamp Table Water Bed Roll-away Bed Small Tables <p>MISCELLANEOUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quilt Rack Large assor., Christmas Decorations Pictures Quilt Tops Quilt Top for Queen Bed (2) Metal Outside Doors Used Furnace & Air Conditioner Windows Clothesline Luggage (5) Chair Cushions Upholstery Machine New Fiberglass Shower 18' Wide Garage Door w/New Track Sewing Machine Cabinets Small Propane Cook Stove 	<p>ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pump Organ, 1897 Cornish, Works Good, Organ Stool Piano Stool Ceramic Water Pitcher/Bowl Remington Ammunition Box "Titanic" Replica Desk Lamp Jenny Lind Bed Brass Baby Bed Wicker Back Couch Assorted Antique Wrenches Tables 10 Gal. Buckeye Blue Ribbon Crock 3 Gal. Red Wing Crock 2 Gal. Red Wing Crock 4 Gal. Blue Band Crock 5 Gal. Red Wing Crock Red Wing Poultry Drinking Faucet Crock Clothes Stomper Pressure Cooker Picture Frames Mirrors Bed Frame Coal Oil Lamp Lots of Antique Wood Pieces (2) Wire Egg Baskets Ice Tongs Wood Barrel Cow Kickers Childs Wicker Rocker Sewing Machine Drawers Coal Oil Brooder Stove 	<p>OFFICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zerex Copy Machine, works File Cabinets <p>APPLIANCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 Cu. Ft. Kitchen Aid Almond Refrigerator Whirlpool Range w/Glass Top Whirlpool Washing machine Whirlpool Dryer Convection Oven Sm. 6.4 Cu. Ft. Deepfreeze Dorm Refrigerator Vacuum Cleaner <p>KITCHEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crock Pot Sm & Lg. Pressure Cookers 20 Cup Stainless Coffee Pot Marshall Pottery Bread Machine Lg. Assort. Dishes, Pots, Pans <p>LAWN & GARDEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2) Metal Lawn Chairs Plant Stands Assortment Garden Tools Assort. Lawn Ornaments Lawn Mowers Mulcher• Honda Snow Blower Troybuilt Roto Tiller Garden Hose • Lawn Chairs Gas Weed Eater • Bird Baths Gas Grill • Patio Furniture Cypress Compost <p>TOOLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wood Clamp Electric Chain Saw Electric Miter Box Saw Table Saw • Ladders Craftsman Band Saw 1/2 HP Electric Grinder Lg. Assort. Tools (2) Electric Paint Sprayers Wet Vacuum • Hand Sprayer Cross-Cut Saws
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