



WITH A HELPING HAND AND A SMILE, Eldon Huntley (above) helped Eva Bryan off of Bus 22 on Friday after he picked her up at the hair dresser's. Mr. Huntley (below) drives the bus around town four days a week, taking people to the doctor, dentist, grocery store and to run other errands.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

'Bus 22' gives free rides

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

It's large, purplish, holds at least 10 people at a time, though it seldom carries more than a couple, rattles a little over the brick streets and answers to the name Bus 22.

Decatur County's transportation bus gives rides to people who either don't have a vehicle or don't drive.

The main driver is Eldon Huntley, although on Wednesdays, Alvina Gamblin takes over to give him a day off.

Bus 22 was purchased new in 1984 through a Kansas Department of Transportation grant. County Clerk Marilyn Horn said grant money comes from federal funds channeled through the state.

The county pays half of the monthly expenses for the service with the state reimbursing them for 20 percent. Basically the county pays about \$5,000 a year to run Bus 22, which comes out of the county general and the senior citizen funds.

In 16 years of use, the bus has become a main fixture in people's lives.



Oberlin residents have become used to seeing the bus rattling down the street. Mr. Huntley said he starts the day at 8 a.m. and heads for the barn about 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

"The real purpose of the bus is to

transport people who can live alone," said Mr. Huntley, "but don't have the means of transportation."

A lot of those people live at the Good Samaritan Center and Mr. Huntley takes them to the hospital. (Please see BUS on Page 8A)

Hospital officials agree on consultants

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Administrators at area hospitals that have gone out on their own say there is no reason for Decatur County Hospital not to go independent, but agree that the board will need to use a consulting firm to keep on top of federal regulations.

One of the most important things for a small, independent hospital, said Michael Boyles, chief executive officer for Citizens Medical Center in Colby, is to have someone who can keep up with health care regulations because they change so rapidly. It seems that what was a rule yesterday is not necessarily a rule today, he said. The rules change all the time, and someone has to be prepared to stay on top of that.

"I can't imagine any industry that evolves as rapidly and continuously as health care," said Mr. Boyles.

There are no excuses in health care, he said. It is about taking care of 100 percent of the people 100 percent of the time and if the hospital doesn't know

the changes in laws and regulations, they can't do that.

The hospital in Colby has been an independent facility since 1980. Before that, it was a county facility and under a number of management contracts. Currently, the hospital is under a management agreement with Rural Health Development in Nebraska, which employs Mr. Boyles. Although they have a management contract, he said, the firm acts more as a consulting service and doesn't make decisions for the hospital.

The company is involved in board meetings, said Mr. Boyles, and makes recommendations to the board, although the final decision is still local.

Mr. Boyles said Citizens was one of the first hospitals in the state to go independent and it had to go through a whopping battle. A facility had never gone independent of the county before to run as a nonprofit facility. There were lots of obstacles to overcome, he said. Although the hospital isn't affiliated

with the county, Mr. Boyles said, the ideal situation would be to be independent but still be able to collect a county tax, which is how the hospital here will be set up when it completely cuts ties with Banner Health Systems this spring.

The hospital here will be using a consulting service and Administrator Lynn Doeden and the rest of the management team have been told by the board not to hesitate to call for help when they need it.

Mr. Boyles said that there is no rhyme nor reason to why or when you call in a consultant. Ninety-five percent of the questions are gut instinct. Administrators have to go with what they feel, he said, and Mrs. Doeden has the experience to know when something is a problem.

His last piece of advice was for the board members, who he said are always going to be criticized no matter what decision they make. Mr. Boyles said to (Please see STAFF on Page 8A)

Opinion says sheriff wrong; man can serve separate days

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

An attorney general's opinion in a case where an Oberlin man was sentenced to serve five days in jail one day at a time says that the sheriff doesn't have the authority to change the sentence.

Joseph Doyle, 40, pled guilty to driving on a suspended license on Oct. 11 and was sentenced in municipal court to spend five days in jail and pay \$1,500 in fines. Mr. Doyle was sentenced to serve individual days on Sundays so he could keep working at his job Monday through Saturday.

When he arrived at the Decatur County Jail, however, officers would not allow him in because Sheriff Ken Badsky said that people can't serve one day at a time. The jail does allow inmates to pay \$20 a day for work release.

Mr. Doyle didn't want to pay the \$20 and returned home with a credit to his sentence, since he had showed up to serve his time.

Since Mr. Doyle spent two days in jail at the time of his arrest, that left two days on his sentence, meaning he would have to pay \$40 to be released for two days of work release and then spend the night.

Since that wasn't the sentence, City Attorney Steve Hirsch asked the attorney general's office for an opinion, which took a couple of months to get. It came in just before Christmas.

On Dec. 27, Sheriff Badsky told the commissioners that "Going to jail should not be convenient for the person going to jail. It should be a penalty, not a privilege."

Although the attorney general's

opinion is not law, Sheriff Badsky said he would follow the sentencing orders of Municipal Judge Paul Lueschen. He said that he thinks there needs to be communication between the judge and him about the officers' work loads before sentencing someone, especially this way.

Sheriff Badsky said he didn't think all the facts of the case were presented to the attorney general, since it wasn't pointed out that Mr. Doyle was offered work release.

The city pays \$10 a day for the first 10 days for prisoners to serve time in the jail, said Sheriff Badsky. According to the contract, the city is supposed to pay \$20 a day for the first 10 days but the sheriff and chief of police have since made a verbal agreement at \$10. The (Please see SENTENCE on Page 8A)

Baby shows up three days late

With a due date of Dec. 31, doctors told Anna and John Cressler that they just might be the parents of the Decatur County New Year's baby, and they were right, although Gage Allen waited until three days into 2002 to show up.

Gage was born at 6:55 p.m. Thursday at the Decatur County Hospital. He weighed eight pounds, 12.3 ounces.

His mother said although doctors had mentioned that they had a good chance of having the New Year's baby, she didn't care — she just wanted it to be over with.

Gage is the third boy born into the Cressler family. His older brothers are Aaron, 4, and Shawn, 2. Mrs. Cressler said that Aaron thinks Gage is pretty hot stuff but Shawn isn't really sure yet what to think.

Friday afternoon, the big brothers were in the hospital, bouncing around the room, showing their little brother things to come. Shawn seemed to be more interested in riding in his car, and Gage's hospital bed that had wheels on it.

The Cresslers said they knew beforehand they were having a boy, although they are not saying that is what they were hoping for.

Anna is the daughter of Sandy Ziegler and step-father Scott of Oberlin and Gage is her fourth grandchild.

"It's another boy," said Mrs. Ziegler, "and they are all full-fledged boys."

Mr. Cressler's sister Penny and brother-in-law Jeff own Hayward's Floor Coverings.

For being the first baby of the New Year, Gage and his family will receive a pile of gifts from stores in town, including Ray Jewelry, Fredrickson Insurance and the LandMark Inn. A gift certificate will be given by The Dresser, a \$25 certificate will be given from GoldBank, \$10 from Ward Drug Store, \$10 from Ben Franklin, \$25 from



A HAPPY FAMILY welcomed Gage Allen into the world as Oberlin's New Year's Baby on Thursday. His parents, John and Anna Cressler, already have two sons Aaron (left) and Shawn (right of his mother).

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Addleman Drug Store and \$10 from Stanley Hardware.

Prairie Petals is giving a balloon-and-flower arrangement, Pizza Hut a pizza for two, Scissor Trix a free haircut and style, First National Bank a \$50

savings bond, Custom Trophy and Engraving an engravable baby photo album, *The Oberlin Herald* a year's free subscription and Raye's Grocery a case of baby food.

Shopping numbers about the same

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Merchants used special deals, drawings and longer hours to fight a slow economy, and the result was about the same amount of shopping in Oberlin stores over the holiday shopping season as the year before.

Some stores did report seeing more people come through the door and spend more money, but for the most part there were either fewer people than last year or just about the same.

The Oberlin Business Alliance tried to do new things this season to help bring in more customers. The major innovation was to stay open until 8 p.m. three nights before Christmas while soup suppers were being held down-

town.

Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, said the night openings need to be worked on a little for next year, since they didn't really generate much traffic. He said the general feeling he has gotten from other store owners is that the nights weren't that productive. Maybe, he said, the night hours weren't advertised well enough or there needs to be more specials, but something needs to be changed.

In the three evenings that participating stores downtown were open, Mr. Vollertsen said he didn't have any customers, although the events going on were well attended.

Overall, he said the numbers for this

holiday shopping season were down, although, he said he was pleased because 60 days before the opening night he expected numbers to be even worse.

Stores also were open 1-4 p.m. Sundays during the holidays. Mr. Vollertsen said the first Sunday and the last Sunday of the shopping season were really good, but the others were mediocre.

Out on the highway at Dale's Fish 'n' Fun, co-owner Joe Dejmal said that their numbers were probably the same as last year even though the store had a slow start. In the last week of the season, said Mr. Dejmal, they noticed a surge in people buying.

(Please see STORES on Page 8A)

Planning starts for annual Seeds of Hope Telethon on Feb. 2 at The Gateway

It is time to raise money for community causes with the eighth annual "Seeds of Hope" Telethon less than a month away, from 1 to 10 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 2, at The Gateway.

The telethon raises money for Decatur County organizations each year through dona-

tions and an auction over cable channel 7. This year, the telethon will give to 19 organizations, each of which sent a letter to the committee saying what it would use the money for.

Those organizations are the Decatur County Stand Against Violence, Doorway Ministries,

Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission, Oberlin Lions Club, Decatur County Museum, Teens for Christ, Decatur County Fair Foundation, American Family Radio, Forget-Me-Not, Oberlin Swim Club,

Decatur Area Theater Association, King's Kids, Jennings City Library, Sunflower Cinema, Decatur County Ministerial Association and the Boy Scouts.

All of the money collected through the telethon will be split evenly and given to the recipi-

ents. Each of the groups needs to provide a member to give an on-air interview, one person to answer the phones and one talent to represent them.

The goal for this year's telethon is to raise (Please see TELETHON on Page 8A)

* Staff has big job

(Continued from Page 1A)

make decisions based on the facts and then stick to them. It may turn out that the decision was wrong, but it still has to be seen through.

"The board and administrators are at the point where they are going to become more empowered, and sometimes that isn't very comfortable," he said, "but they need to seize the opportunity, because in the long run, they are going to feel great about what they do."

Don Kessen, chief executive officer at Rawlins County Health Center in Atwood, agreed with Mr. Boyles about staying on top of the regulations and laws.

"They need someone or some firm that has all of the knowledge or the people to get the knowledge for regulations, cost reports and all the year-end reports," said Mr. Kessen. "There is no way a small hospital can do it on their own. They just can't afford the people. It takes expertise in each field, and they can't afford to pay it."

Mr. Kessen said that they use Great Plains Alliance in Atwood to do all of that for them. He said that in Atwood, the hospital has hit some rocky spots. Great Plains was a management firm in the beginning, and then there was a disagreement and the company left. A company from Oklahoma came in, and things started to go downhill fast. In January 1992, the hospital went back to Great Plains. By that time, he said, there was no office manager, no lab technician, no nursing staff, but since then everything has turned around.

Mr. Kessen said the hospital is independent but they have chosen to hire Great Plains to help with the financial reports, stay on top of regulations and make suggestions, although the final decision comes from the board.

The hospital hired Mr. Kessen after the switch, he said. He was supposed to be hired on an interim basis, but that was 10 years ago.

"There is no way a small hospital is going to make it anymore without some type of management or network," he said.

At the Norton County Hospital, Administrator Rich Miller said that some of the Decatur County Hospital Board members had been over to talk to him and he told them that he would help them.

* Telethon plans underway

(Continued from Page 1A)

\$13,000, which the organizers think is possible, since for the last two years they have raised at least \$12,000.

The telethon will include a walk-a-thon again this year. Those interested in doing the walk around the track at The Gateway should call Dennis Brown at 475-2623 or pick up pledge forms at Hirsch and Pratt law offices.

There will also be a chili cookoff, organized by Peg Smith at 475-2296. The chili will be sold at the concession stand after the judging. Chili needs to be there by 5 p.m. and anything goes, said organizer Anita Hirsch. The telethon hasn't had a cook off for two years and is trying it again.

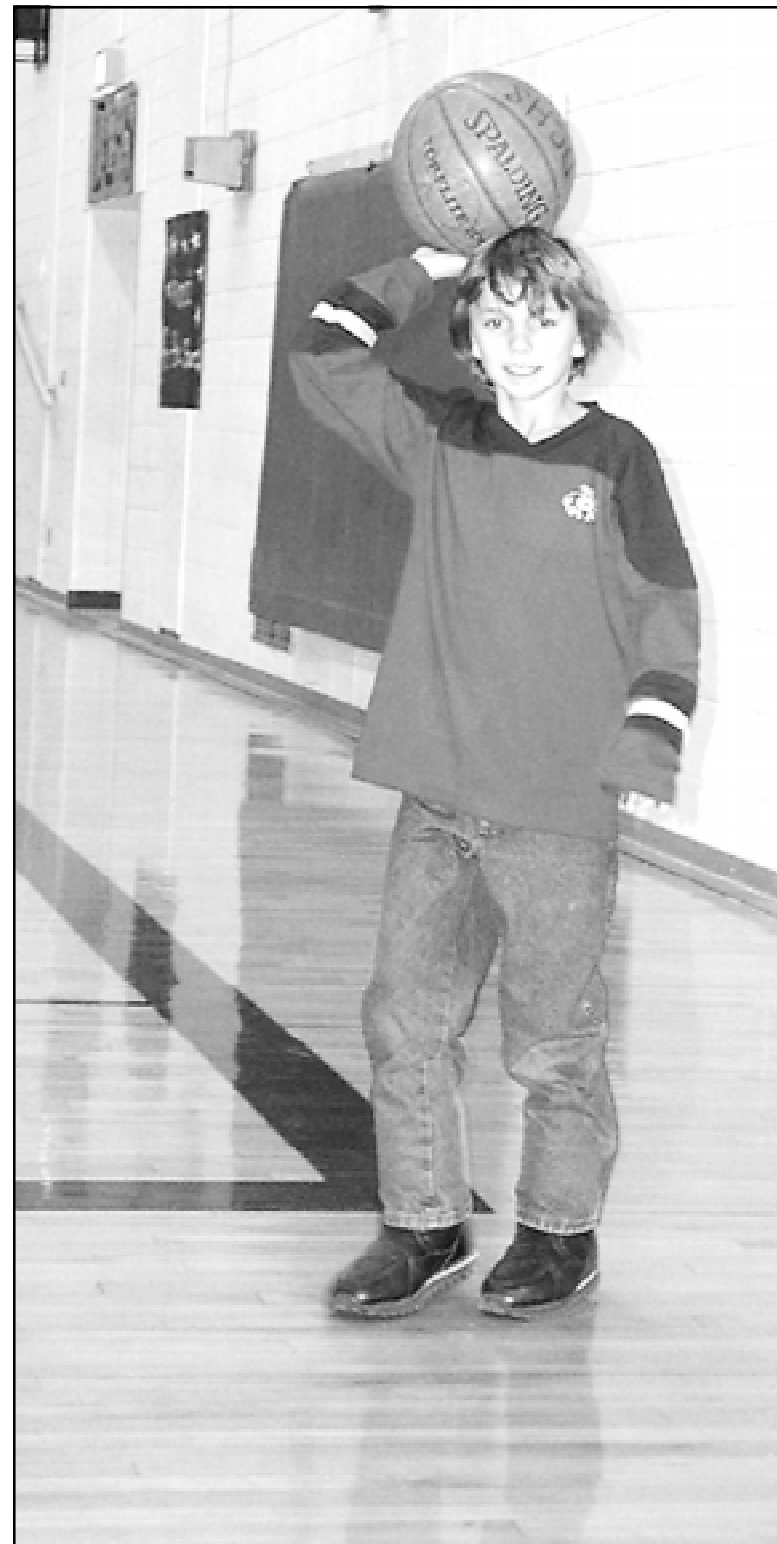
A big part of the telethon is the talent, which organizers said "comes out of the woodwork," from kids singing, dancing and playing musical instruments to grown men telling jokes and many others who share their abilities. Mrs. Hirsch is in charge of talent and said there is no age limit. Anyone who wants to share a talent should call her at 475-2358.

The telethon committee is still looking for items to be donated for the on-air auction, which will soon be on display at the Northwest Kansas Credit Union window.

Other help can be used as the event starts to get underway. Volunteers should call Mrs. Hirsch.

Emcees for the day-long event so far are Martina and Marvin Matchett, Stan McEvoy and Janice Cundiff.

Just a little fun



WITH TEMPERATURES BELOW FREEZING, Steven Corcoran, 10, was in the high school gym on Saturday practicing his shots along with boys from the Decatur Community High basketball team.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

* Sentence is OK

(Continued from Page 1A)

sheriff said the jail contract will be updated this year.

After waiting for months for the opinion, though, Mr. Doyle hasn't started serving his remaining two days. It seems he has disappeared.

After being sentenced for driving with a suspended license, Mr. Doyle was arrested for allegedly pulling a knife on another man at 202 N. Rodehaver and charged with aggravated assault.

After Mr. Doyle was released from

jail that weekend, officers say, he disappeared. Sheriff Badsky said that there is a warrant out for his arrest for the assault charge but Mr. Doyle has not been found.

Mr. Hirsch said there is no warrant for Mr. Doyle for driving with a suspended license because it is a misdemeanor and he wouldn't be extradited back here if arrested in another state on that charge. If Mr. Doyle is found and arrested on the felony warrant, though, he would still have to serve his two days in jail for the suspended license.

Booking takes an hour

Each time a city police officer arrests someone and takes them to the Decatur County Jail, says Sheriff Ken Badsky, it takes at least an hour to book that person.

Sheriff Badsky said that when a city officer brings someone to be booked into jail, a county officer has to be called in to do the procedure, and that is the most time consuming part of it.

After the officer arrives, he has to fill out several items of paper work. One is the big jail calendar book, which stays on the fourth floor of the courthouse in the jail. The second is a smaller jail book which is sent to the second floor, and lastly, the officer has to enter the information into the jail computer.

The inmate is then issued a uniform to wear, bedding and a bag of toiletries. Sheriff Badsky said that all of those items cost money.

The person is also fingerprinted, although the arresting officer does that part using county equipment.

Sheriff Badsky said he isn't sure what the cost is each time a person is booked. He said it varies depending on whether a county officer needs to be called in to do the booking or is already in the office.

Each time a person enters the jail, he said, that person has to be booked in. For example, with Joseph Doyle, who

was arrested for driving with a suspended license and sentenced to five days in jail (later reduced to three) in municipal court, officers would have had to book him in for each Sunday his sentence said he was supposed to serve. Although the sheriff admitted they probably could have kept and re-issued him the bag of toiletries, he said they would have had to wash the bedding and uniform, costing the county money each time Mr. Doyle checked out.

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* Bus will pick up anyone

(Continued from Page 1A)
clinic or a dentist. Others come from Cedar Living Center and Wheat Ridge Terrace.

Mr. Huntley said although most of the riders are senior citizens, the bus will take anyone anywhere in the county with the exception of taking kids to school. The bus will pick up a mom to take her to the school to pick up a sick child and take them both to the hospital, though.

The bus very rarely leaves the county, he said, although he has driven people to the McCook hospital.

"We try to work with people," he said.

The bus used to go to Jennings and Norcat for a day, but hasn't done that in over a year. The bus, however, is still set up to serve all of Decatur County, he said, and all anyone has to do is call.

An average day is about 16 rides, Mr. Huntley said, but in the winter the number goes up, especially if it snows. Bad weather stops some people from driving and instead they call Bus 22 to pick them up to run their errands or drop them somewhere.

Mr. Huntley has been the main driver of the bus for a year now and said he enjoys his job. He said he likes to be around people and work with them and this gives him the opportunity to do both.

He gets a little conversation and is able to give a helping hand to most of his riders, including Eva Bryan, who



ON MAIN STREET, Bus 22 is a familiar sight.

lives at Wheat Ridge Terrace. Friday afternoons, Mrs. Bryan goes to get her hair done, said Mr. Huntley. He picks her up at her home around lunchtime and takes her back a little after 1 p.m.

Mrs. Bryan has a little wooden box that she brings on the bus with her. It sits just inside the door where Mr. Huntley is able to grab it and place it on the ground in front of the first step before she gets on the bus. The three-inch step helps cut the first step in half, she said.

Mr. Huntley said that he has other regulars who are like clockwork each week. Monday and Tuesday he takes them to play cards, Thursday they get their hair done and then again on Friday he picks them up.

"A lot of people depend on this bus,"

he said.

In the downtime, Mr. Huntley stays at home instead of driving around town. He has both a radio and a pager, so county dispatch can get in touch with him. The driver said it is easy to get the bus to pick someone up. Just call dispatch at 475-8100 and tell them their name or street address. The dispatcher also finds out if the rider is a walk on or in a wheelchair.

Mr. Huntley said he is excited about the new van which the county should be getting. It is a mini van that will be capable of carrying both walkers and wheelchairs, although it doesn't have a lift.

Bus 22 is the oldest in the state, said Mrs. Horn, since the bus had to have over 50,000 miles on it before the county could apply for another grant. It takes a long time to get those miles in town, said Mrs. Horn.

Once it hit that, the county started the grant procedure. The old bus now has 86,250 miles. Mrs. Horn said she isn't sure when the new van will be in. Bus 22 will probably be sold in the county auction after it arrives, she said.

Although the new vehicle will be smaller and may not have as much personality as Bus 22, Mr. Huntley said he thinks it will get the job done.

"I think having a bus here is an excellent idea," said Mr. Huntley. "I hear comments from people all the time who don't know what they would do without the bus."

* Stores didn't increase business

(Continued from Page 1A)

Mr. Dejmal said the store offered specials to buyers all the way through the season, but it seemed to take people a little longer to get in the shopping spirit.

The outdoor store stayed open evening hours and Saturdays, although he said business wasn't anything to crow about at those times. Mr. Dejmal said they did see a number of shoppers coming from out of town. There were several from McCook and other areas which don't have a similar outdoor store.

Back on Main Street, Laurie Wasson at Prairie Petals had just completed her second holiday shopping season. She said that although she hasn't compared sales, she felt busier. Mrs. Wasson said she decided to not keep the store open

for Sunday hours but did stay open the three special nights before Christmas. Those nights, she said, it seemed like business was decent, but not great. Although she said there was more business those nights than she expected, she doesn't know if she would want to do it again next year.

Mrs. Wasson said that she has been trying to come up with some fresh ideas for the next holiday shopping season, but hasn't come up with anything yet.

Across the street at Addleman Drug Store, owner Rusty Addleman said that he didn't think business was down, but he hasn't compared the total sales. Mr. Addleman agreed that shopping on Sundays and at night was almost nothing. He said he would recommend that the stores next year not stay open at those times because business doesn't

even pay the overhead to be open.

The business alliance drawings all went well and brought out a lot of people, but those people didn't turn into shoppers afterwards, he said.

Mr. Addleman said he didn't know if part of the reason people were not shopping was because of Sept. 11. After the terrorists attacks, he said, for the first month of two, he said he saw a drop in sales and he wonders if those people are still not buying.

At Dollar General, Manager Kelly Brown said the store had seen a better year than last year, dollar wise and number wise. She said she wasn't sure why the store had a better year. They didn't stay open any extra hours or offer any specials, she said, but they did sell a lot of Christmas related items and toys.

Yard, hedges destroyed sometime Monday night

The Oberlin Police were called to 607 N. Neill Monday morning when a woman awoke to find hedges and a concrete wall in her yard destroyed by a hit-and-run driver.

Myrna Wilson said she heard a thud about 10 p.m. the night before but didn't look outside. Monday morning she discovered that someone had driven through her yard, running over the hedges and then hitting the wall between her yard and her neighbors.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said that he didn't have an estimated value yet, but was looking for the vehicle and the driver.

Around lunch time on Monday, officers received a call that there had been tools stolen from a Kelley Drilling Co. truck parked at their building near the airport. The estimated value is close to \$1,000 for what was missing.

Thursday night, or early Friday, Jan. 4 morning officers were called to Sappa Valley Youth Ranch on an alleged battery. The officer asked questions, but didn't take anyone in. Chief Lockhart

said the case is still under investigation. Last Wednesday, officers received a call on damage to a 2002 Chevy pickup belonging to Michael Wasson. The truck was parked in the 200 block of East Maple.

The truck had been "keyed" and had scratches on the hood and down the driver's side. The estimated loss is \$450. The damage happened sometime between New Year's Eve and last Wednesday.

On Dec. 24, a 1996 Monte Carlo was stolen from Amanda Chambers of Hays while it was parked at 609 N. Neill Avenue. The car was recovered in a shed in Kenesaw, Neb., near Hastings two days later. Officers said it was an area that youths frequent. There have been no arrests.

Around 11:32 a.m. on Dec. 22, Michael Sauvage, 42, was driving his 1998 Chevy Silverado south on Penn Ave., tried to make a right turn onto Maple on snowpacked roads and slid

into two other vehicles.

A 2001 Chevy S-10 pickup belonging to Loyd Moore Inc. of Oberlin and a 1995 Ford Windstar belonging to Lisa Davis both had damage.

There was no ticket written. On Dec. 21 at the junction of U.S. 36 and U.S. 83, William Black, 25, driving a 1986 Chevy Celebrity, hit a car going west. Although Mr. Black stopped at the sign on U.S. 83, he told officers there was a car next to him blocking his view and he went ahead and crossed the intersection, striking a 1991 Chevy Lumina driven by Brent Marimam, 19, Beloit.

Both vehicles were towed. There were no injuries. Mr. Black got a ticket for failure to yield. While backing his 1999 Ford pickup out of a driveway 4:40 p.m., Dec. 19 at 211 W. Commercial Reginald Witt, 27, hit a 1995 Chevy Lumina belonging to Jonathan and Anna Cressler. No ticket was given.

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