

Churches raising money to help victim of fire

Donation cans have been placed around town for an Oberlin woman who lost her home and belongings in a house fire last week, and sponsors hope people will respond this week.

Mildred Lippelmann's home caught on fire last Monday afternoon. At the time, Decatur County Fire Chief Bill Cathcart

estimated damage at \$100,000. He said that he thought some things could possibly be salvaged but most of the belongings, including many antiques, were covered in soot.

The fund raiser is being done quickly because the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Smoky Hill Chapter will match what is raised. The chapter has money available for

this but the exact amount isn't known.

A letter from Pastor Charlotte Strecker-Baseler of Faith Lutheran Church says the chapter will match from \$500 to \$1,000, but the books will be closing soon because it is the end of the agency's fiscal year.

The books will close on Monday, which is why the Lutherans are asking that all do-

nations be turned in by Sunday, or at the latest, early Monday morning.

Volunteers planned to take a count of the cans early this week.

The letter asks that a special donation or collection be done for the cause during the Sunday service of area churches, with the totals being called in the next day.

Containers have been placed at First National, The Bank, Farmers Bank and Trust, Stanley Hardware, Addleman Drug Store, Ward Drug Store, Raye's Grocery and the LandMark Inn.

Checks should be made payable to Thrivent Smoky Hill Chapter 30332. Contact Denise Abbey at 475-2698 for details.

School board reads two letters on closed session

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Oberlin School Board read letters from *The Oberlin Herald* and the county attorney at a special meeting Thursday, questioning a recent closed session and discussing when and why boards can discuss items behind closed doors.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said he has talked with County Attorney Steve Hirsch and attorneys for the Kansas Association of School Board about the letters and the closed session the board held at a meeting on Monday, Dec. 8. He said he thought the board was on solid ground.

After that meeting, people in the audience questioned whether the board was talking only about non-elected personnel during the closed session after some things were overheard.

The letter from the paper reminded the board that, with major decisions coming up, it should remember the open meetings law, which requires decisions to be discussed and reached in open sessions.

The letter said that the issues regarding the future of schools in Oberlin should be discussed in open session "first and foremost, because the schools are the single most important institution in our community."

"Teachers, the whole town really, will be watching the board closely in the coming weeks and months. Courts can and will overturn decisions made in closed session in violation of the law."

The letter from Mr. Hirsch cautioned the board and superintendent to be "ever so vigilant of the need to hold to the stated topic."

It also talked about the "common thread doctrine" which does allow some flexibility to units of local government "to discuss matters which would not, by themselves, be appropriate for discussion which is covered under an exception such as the non-elected personnel exception."

"Attorney General Robert Stephan opined in opinion 88-225 that 'discussions concerning consolidation of department and the addition

or elimination of job functions or positions are not a permissible topic under the non-elected personnel exception."

Both of the letters are printed on Page 4A.

Mr. Glodt said both the attorneys said that there is a fine line on the closed sessions. He said he thinks everyone on the board has been trained by Mr. Hirsch about open meetings and open records.

He said he is confident that the board was OK in what it did during the closed session. Mr. Glodt said the board has to protect its employees during discussion of possible layoffs.

This district is different from larger ones, he said, because the board can't say, for example, that they need to reduce the math department by four people and no one will know who those people will be.

He said that the attorneys said that the board has to protect the employees but they also have to abide by the law.

Whenever the board can discuss what needs to be done without identifying individuals, he said, then it needs to be done in open session.

Closed sessions should be used as little as possible and only when absolutely necessary, he said, adding that he thinks the board does a good job of this.

Without any comments on the letters, the board then agreed to go into closed session for non-elected personnel for an hour with Principals Duane Dorshorst and Charles Haag. The board is holding closed sessions to talk about the teachers who might be let go for budget reasons. There was no action taken after the closed session, and no discussion of the issue.

The board then met in closed session without Mr. Glodt for a total of an hour and 40 minutes for non-elected personnel to discuss the superintendent's evaluation. The board met for 45 minutes, 10 and then five without the superintendent. They called Mr. Glodt in and met for 20, 30, 15 and 5 minutes.

Board approves exchange student

The Oberlin School Board approved a 15-year-old foreign exchange student from Brazil enrolling at the high school for the second semester of the school year.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said it is board policy that foreign exchange students should be at least 16, but said he would like the board to listen to the unique situation of this student.

Principal Charles Haag said that last summer, the Votapkas called and were excited about the possibility of the student coming to stay with their family. The girl's aunt had been a student here years ago and has kept in contact with the Votapka family.

He said he has received the papers from an organization called Youth for Understanding and the arrangements have been made for the student to come to Oberlin.

The student, said Mr. Haag, will only be here for the second semester, not the whole year.

Dan Votapka came to the meeting to answer any questions the board might have. Board Member Dwayne Jackson asked if the school has any exchange students now. Mr. Haag said there are none.

The girl speaks fluent English and is a good student, said Mr. Haag. He said that is why he is asking for the board to waive the age limit.

Does anyone remember why 16 is the age limit? Mr. Jackson asked. Board Member Delayne May said it was for maturity.

Board Member Barb Olson said she thought there was a part in the policy that the student had to be here for a full year. She said she knows that is the way it used to be, although she isn't sure if it was changed.

Mr. Glodt said looking at the future of the district, any exchange students would be a help to the students here.

"Only if it's done right," said Mrs. Olson. "I know; I've been there."

It does say in the policy that the paperwork has to be done by Aug. 1, said Mr. Haag, but in this situation, the families know each other and they can choose to send their daughter to live with the Votapkas for a semester. Instead they decided to go through an agency so she can get school credits.

Mr. Jackson said he is OK with it. Everything will be ready to go by next semester.

The original plan was for the student to come here for the entire year. Mr. Votapka said they started talking with the girl's aunt and grandmother last Christmas and then started working on it in June, but they couldn't find a program to send her here to stay with a specific family. Through Youth for Understanding, though, that can happen.

Three win lighting contest

The Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce announced three winners of its Christmas lighting contest at the soup supper Monday.

Jennifer Auxier won first place at 311 E. Ash; Ron Jansonius took sec-

ond at 509 N. Wilson; and Dennis Richards got third at 313 W. Maple. The winners will receive \$75, \$50 and \$25, respectively, off their city electric bills. The contest was only held in Oberlin this year.



WITH A NEWLY REBOUND hymnal in front of him, Dennis Brown led devotions at the Good Samaritan Center before thanking Chris Koerperich (in chair) for his work on the books. —Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Samaritans bind old hymnals

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Three Good Samaritans made a deal recently to bind 46 hymnals and be paid with a dish of white and a dish of red chili.

One of them got a special thanks at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center.

Chris Koerperich of Koerperich Bookbinders in Selden sat in a big purple chair next to the lectern on Friday, Dec. 12, as Dennis Brown with the Forget-me-Nots, a volunteer at the center, told about the project.

He said he had an idea some time ago of buying new hymnals for the center. Then, Mr. Brown said, he thought maybe they could get the old ones repaired. He said he talked with Mr. Koerperich, who lives in Oberlin. He took a look at the books, took them to his shop in Selden and fixed them.

Mr. Brown said at first Mr. Koerperich said it would cost about \$5.50 a book to rebind the song books, but after talking with his brother Don, he called Mr. Brown back. The deal was that the company would bind all the hymnals for a pot of Mr.

Brown's red chili and a pot of white chili. Mr. Brown said he took the chili to the brothers on Thursday.

The hymnals are used seven days a week for morning devotions at the center. Mr. Brown said because of the generosity of the Koerperiches, the residents will have these hymnals for a long time.

Mr. Brown presented Mr. Koerperich with a plaque which said, "Thank you, these hymnals will lift the spirit of the Decatur Good Samaritan Center for years to come."

Mr. Koerperich then joined residents, staff and Mr. Brown in lifting their voices in praise.

The Selden company was started about 35 years ago by Richard Koerperich, father of Don and Chris.

Chris said these days the business keeps the three family members and five employees busy year-around binding family histories, town histories and law books. Ninety-five percent of the business is from out of town, he said, most of it from out of state.

In the summer, he said, they bind school books. The company stays pretty busy all year with a contract from a New Jersey firm that resells law books.

County selling its rides

Decatur County is selling vouchers for "free" rides on the community van at \$10 for 11 tickets.

The idea was suggested by a Kansas Department of Transportation auditor. Although rides on the bus are free, a donation of \$1

is suggested.

The Decatur County clerk's office has the vouchers on sale.

The idea is that friends and family members of those who ride the bus can purchase the vouchers and give them as a gift.

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