

Happy New Year!

THE OBERLIN HERALD

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Goodbye, 2003

It was a busy year

Schools made many headlines

The year has flown by and it barely seems possible that 2004 is upon us.

Looking back on 2003, there have been many events to remember, from the reopening of the Oberlin Speedway and Sunflower Cinema to businesses receiving awards, the merger of the Herndon School District into the Atwood schools, and the Oberlin School Board cutting back payroll and spending to finish the school year.

In each month, there were one to three events that jumped off the front page as things to remember about 2003 or things to celebrate.

In January:

The hot story was the consolidation of schools in Herndon, which is around 20 miles away from Oberlin in Rawlins County.

At the beginning of the month, the Herndon School Board was looking at consolidation with the school districts in Rawlins County, Oberlin or Golden Plains.

Late in the month, the board held a public meeting and took a straw poll in the audience. After that, the Herndon board voted to consolidate with the Rawlins County School District in Atwood.

The Decatur County Sheriff's Department dropped down to one officer, Sheriff Ken Badsky, with Undersheriff Randy McHugh on active duty with the National Guard and Deputy Mark Dahlsten recovering from knee surgery.

By state law, that meant if anything happened to the sheriff, the county clerk would be the next in line.

In February:

The school board in Herndon voted not to consolidate and then decided to consolidate with the Rawlins County School District. The Herndon board then met with the Rawlins County board to set up a transition board. The boards agreed to keep Herndon High School remain open for at least one more year and the grade school for another four.

Oberlin shoppers got a shock one morning when Duckwall's on Main Street closed without warning. Officials locked the doors and hung brown paper in the windows.

A team of managers showed up from Abilene to start packing and



INFEBRUARY, Ed Russ of Oberlin loaded boxes into a truck (above) after the Duckwalls store on Main Street closed unexpectedly. In April, the first race at the new Oberlin Speedway (below) was held with over 60 cars in competition on the 3/8 of a mile track.

— Herald staff photos by Dave Bergling and Kimberly Brandt

moving out the merchandise. Officials said that a study on the store showed that it wasn't the best use of the company's assets. They said the store wasn't big enough.

In March:

The Oberlin School Board continued to talk cost savings. The staff came up with several ideas, from cutting supply purchases to having organizations pay for buses for trips.

At the same time, farmers were busy signing up for the new subsidy program under the latest farm bill.

In April:

After years of working on the 3/8-mile track, the Oberlin Speedway opened. It was a sunny, warm day and over 60 cars showed up to compete.

Officials from the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services announced that they will close the office in downtown Oberlin. The officials explained the people will still be able to get services. There will be a toll free number to call and get help and there is an office in Hays.

The officials said the office was scheduled to close around Sept. 1. The office is still open from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. on Thursdays. Otherwise people can call 785-475-2171 for an appointment. The doors will close in February.

In May:

The Oberlin School Board voted



to increase the school district's local option budget by 5 percent. The local tax share of the district's general-fund budget was at 13.11 percent and the state allows school boards to increase up to 25 percent. With the increase, the board went to 18.11 percent. (See 2003 on Page 10A)

Group looks at 4-lane

U.S. 36 people talk to county

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Representatives from the U.S. Highway 36 Association talked with the Decatur County commissioners Tuesday morning about plans to make the road a four-lane expressway.

Steve Haynes, publisher of *The Oberlin Herald*, and Bob Strevey, a Norcat area farmer and retired military man, met with the county officials to tell them the association and its long-term goal.

Mr. Haynes said the association represents 13 counties along U.S. 36 in Kansas. The idea is to have two board members from each county, he said. They try to promote traffic on the highway and keep the condition of the road up.

The long-term project, said Mr. Haynes, is to widen the highway to four lanes starting at the east end. He said the association doesn't have any illusion that the project will happen overnight, but thinks it is worth working on.

A lot of the Kansas Department of Transportation's money goes to working on existing roads and rebuilding them, he said, not building new ones, but the association is starting to look into the whole process.

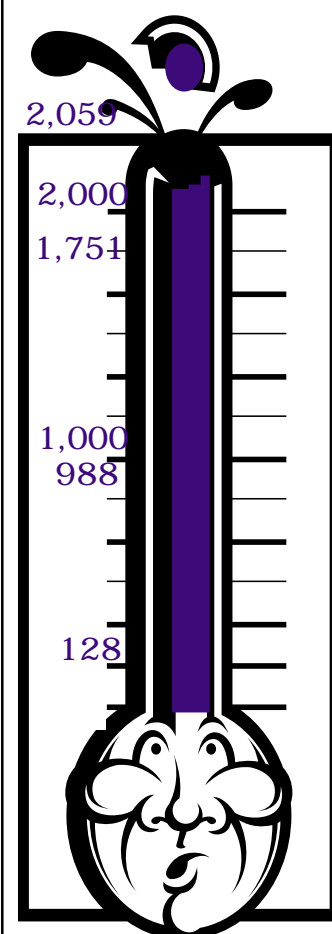
When the board met in Phillipsburg in late October, the group decided to get a study for the four lane highway and get the process started.

Mr. Haynes said the vision of the association in the next 20 years is to justify a four-lane highway as far as Belleville.

The state, he said, moved much of the traffic and highway-related businesses to the Colby and Goodland areas when it built Interstate 70. He said he would like to see some of that come back this way on U.S. 36.

The association isn't asking the county for anything at this time, he said. The project is going to cost about \$50,000 among 13 counties. Mr. Haynes said the association will (See GROUP on Page 10A)

Food drive hits goal



The annual food drive at Stanley Hardware has exceeded the goal of 2,000 items.

There is still time to get more food into the store's window before the drive ends on Jan. 1.

First baby of 2004 will take home prizes

One couple expecting an addition to the family will win a carload of prizes from businesses for having Decatur County's first baby of the New Year.

With 2004 practically here, businesses in Oberlin are offering prizes for the mother who delivers first in the new year.

Last year, a Rawlins County couple won the prizes when they delivered a daughter at Decatur County Hospital.

This year, businesses giving away prizes are Addleman Drug Store with a \$25 gift certificate, Fredrickson Insurance Agency with a gift, Pizza Hut with a pizza

for two, Stanley Hardware with a \$10 gift certificate, Ward Drug Store with a \$10 gift certificate, Raye's Grocery with a case of baby food, Ray Jewelry with a gift, the Dresser with a gift certificate, Custom Trophy with a baby album, First National Bank with a \$25 savings bond, Ben Franklin Store with a \$10 gift certificate and *The Oberlin Herald* with a one year subscription to the paper. Both KFNF 101.1 and American Family Insurance wish the family the best of luck.

All gifts have to be picked up in the first 60 days. Ads for the 2004 baby promotion are on Page 6B.

Court to get new computers

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Decatur County court employees will be getting new computers after the first of the year which will be able to run new state-supported program.

Clerk of the Court Janet Meitl said back in June 2001, when they went to a legislative update in Topeka, she heard the court office was going to need to buy new computers.

Currently, she said, the court runs with a support system through the state for the computers. Basically, the state can come in through the Internet to the computer system and straighten things out, but there are five systems statewide. So the state decided to change all of the counties to the same system and then everyone would run off of the same program. That was about 2 1/2 years ago.

The state program, Mrs. Meitl

said, works through the Office of Judicial Administration. She said they started with a trial run in two bigger counties and one rural county.

So far, all the counties except for those in western Kansas have the new system installed.

The program is being paid for with a Byrne Grant the state received, but that doesn't include the new computers.

Mrs. Meitl said the computers the court has aren't capable of running the new software, so they had to order four new computers and a server. That will mean Magistrate Judge John Bremer, Mrs. Meitl, Deputy Clerk Rhonda Wildeman and the public will all have a computer to use.

The total bill for the computers is \$15,183, said Mrs. Meitl. She ordered them out of Infinitec in Hays.

At recent county commissioners' meeting, Mrs. Meitl let the group know that she was going to have to order the computers.

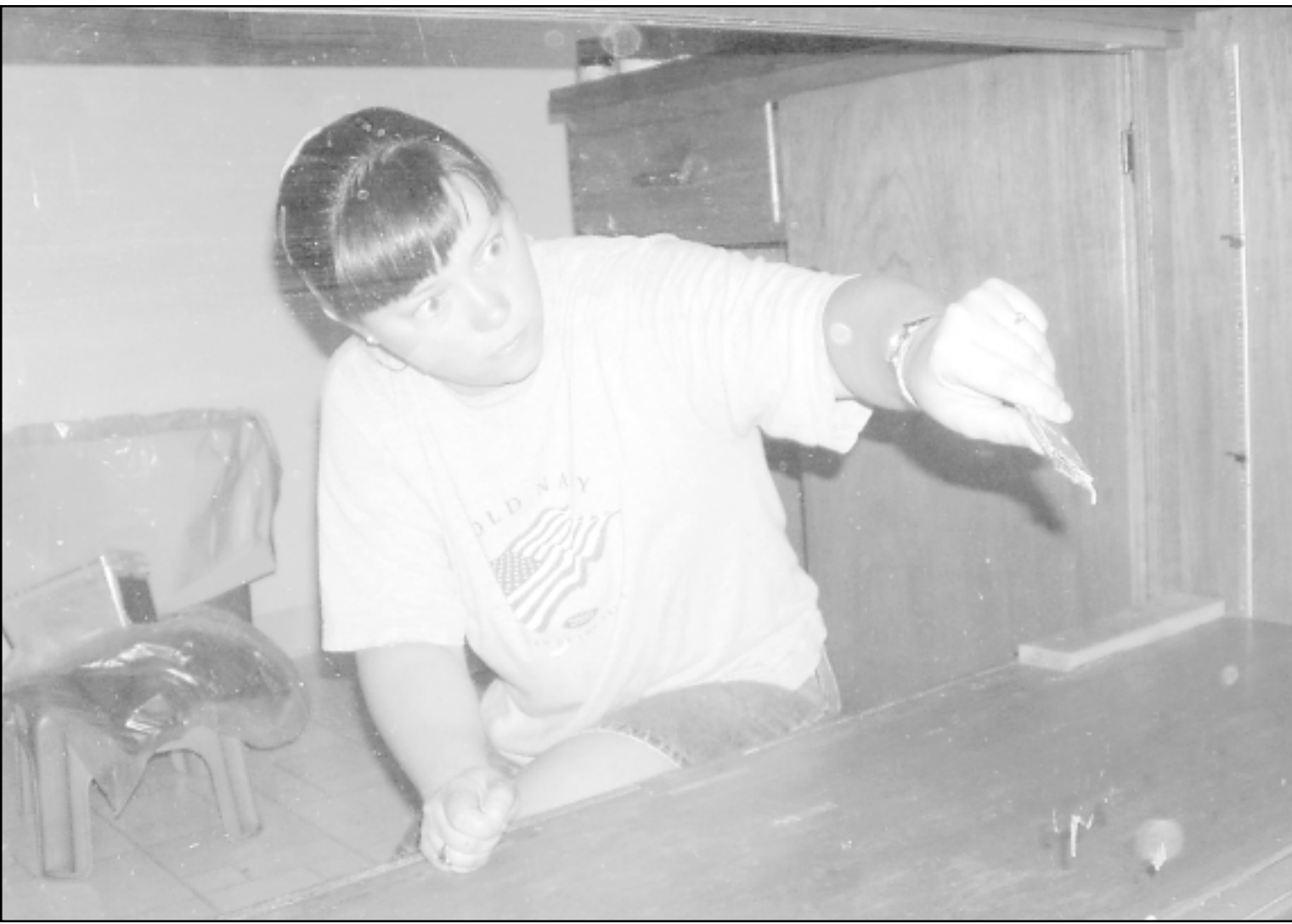
Since the office found out about the change 2 1/2 years ago, she said, they have been saving money and putting it in a special equipment fund.

Part of the money for the new machines will come out of that, she said, and the rest will come out of the budget for this year.

The office get money from both the state and the county. The state, she said, pays all the salaries and then the county pays for everything else.

Mrs. Meitl said the new system will save them time, once everyone knows how to use it.

Currently, when she enters a new case into the computer, she has to (See COURT on Page 10A)



AT SUNFLOWER CINEMA in August, Kayla Bose cleaned the inside of the candy window while other volunteers

cleaned the bathrooms, lobby and theater to help get the theater ready for reopening. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Group wants four-lane road along U.S. 36

(Continued from Page 1A)
probably look at private money first, then grants and then maybe ask for some help from those 13 counties. The study would be done by the Docking Institute at Fort Hays State University.

The highway, said Mr. Strevey, is vital to economic development in the whole area, and this is one of the least developed areas in the state. Mr. Haynes said they want to try to have the project in the next state highway plan.

How many miles are there across Decatur County? asked Commissioner Patricia Glenn. Mr. Haynes said the county is 30 miles wide and the highway is pretty much a straight line. He added that the highway through the county is in pretty good shape.

Mrs. Glenn asked how they would put a four lane through Oberlin. Mr. Haynes said the study would provide an answer to that question, but it would have to come from people in Oberlin. It might come right through the present location with a little widening, he said, or shift north of town.

Mr. Strevey said that counties in this area don't have the same kind of pull with representation in Topeka like it used to be. Mr. Haynes said the association will have to take the facts to the state, and then it is a big money game.

The men asked the commissioners to talk with other commissioners along the highway and see what they think. Mr. Haynes said in order to get the project done, the counties need to join together.

*2003 brought reasons to celebrate

(Continued from Page 1A)
If the district's valuation stays the same, the increase of 5 percent was projected at a little over 6 mills on the property tax levy. Each mill brings in around \$27,000.

because of new, stricter federal regulations. The council started discussion of the new sewer plant for the city. The cost will be \$2 million to \$3 million. Oberlin School District voters said yes to the local option budget tax increase. There were 606 yes votes and 392 voted no. Teachers agreed to take a salary freeze.

the curriculum council and textbook changes for a year.

to make a decision.

In August:
The Oberlin City Council decided on a mechanical plant for the new sewer system. Water restrictions stayed in full force with the city operating off three wells.

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The Oberlin City Council decided on a mechanical plant for the new sewer system. Water restrictions stayed in full force with the city operating off three wells.

In October:
The school board agreed to start some capital outlay projects, including replacing furnaces in the developmental kindergarten room, getting bids on tuck pointing for both buildings, checking into infrared test for electrical systems and making sure each classroom has two functioning windows.

At the end of the month, an electrical fire ruined Mildred Lippelmann's home south of the hospital. The community joined to raise money for her. The fire chief estimated the damage on the home and her belongings at \$100,000.

Man hurt in accident

A 59-year-old Texas man was flown by helicopter out of the Oberlin Airport after an accident at 9:30 a.m. last Monday.

spun 90 degrees, coming to rest facing south.

Sheriff Ken Badsy said Domingo Falcon told officers he was driving a 1989 Chevy Corsica from Texas to South Dakota for a doctor's appointment.

The trailer was being pulled by Mike Porsch of Selden with a 1992 Ford pickup. Sheriff Badsy said there was damage to the trailer and the car was totaled.

Mr. Falcon was northbound on U.S. 83, two miles south of town, and drifted into the southbound lane. His car struck a horse trailer and

Mr. Falcon was taken by ambulance to the hospital and flown out a few hours later. He received two tickets, one for no insurance and the other for driving left of center.

Subscribers get free paper

Subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald* are getting a little holiday present this week — an extra paper. Subscribers pay for a year of newspapers, 52 weeks, but because

of how the weeks fall this year, there were actually 53 Wednesdays, which means an extra paper.

lisher Cynthia Haynes. It either means each subscriber got a free paper, or every paper you got throughout the year was just a little bit cheaper.

* Court office needs new machines

(Continued from Page 1A)
enter it three times to enter the receipt of money, enter it into the index and then statistically. With the new program, it can all be done at the same time.

peka for training but since Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Sheridan, Wallace, Thomas, Norton, Smith, Phillips, Osbourne and Graham counties all need the training, someone with the state office will come out here.

has been trained, the state wants everyone to go to Topeka for follow up. The state hasn't said how long this system will be used, she said, but she hopes since it took almost three years to get it installed across the state, they will keep it for some time.

Ambulance runs written off at meeting

The Decatur County commissioners agreed to write off 23 ambulance runs which have not been paid by Medicare after having a 15-minute closed session for non-elected personnel to look at files on the patients. Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy brought in information about the runs for the commissioners to review. Commissioner Patricia Glenn asked if Mr. Pomeroy had taken the agreement between the ambulance department and hospital to hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden. The agreement covers payments by the hospital for service to hospital patients.

- Signed seven orders for work to be paid to the road and bridge department for work done in Bassettville, Finley, Logan, Oberlin, Olive, Sherman and Summit townships.
- Signed a resolution for a transfer of \$250 to the general fund from other county funds for payment of the mailing machine.
- Signed the holiday resolution giving the county employees New Year's Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas in 2004 and New Year's Day in 2005 off of work.
- Re-appointed Gene Gallentine

- and Joan McKenna to the hospital board for another three-year term.
- Agreed that Mrs. Glenn would sit on the Region I Emergency Medical Service board with Mr. Pomeroy.
- Signed change orders for the 2003 tax roll for clerical errors, reducing or abating eight, deleting three, adding one and changing three addresses.
- Decided to spend up to \$150 on decorations, gifts and entertainment for the annual employee appreciation, Sunday, Jan. 18.
- Agreed not to meet on Tuesday, Dec. 30, since there are five Tuesdays in the month.

Mental health hours higher

Workers at the High Plains Mental Health Center of Norton told Decatur County commissioners that the total billable hours for the year through September were higher than past years.

There was no definite reason given why the hours were higher. County Attorney Steve Hirsch said it would be nice if the agency had an office in Oberlin since the demand is so high.

Mr. Sturgill said Mr. McVay has been with the agency for two years as a therapist. He comes to the county health department office here to see patients. Ms. Pulec is an adult case manager and works in this area.

The commissioners approved a resolution to allow outstanding checks from previous years to be canceled. The county auditor had suggested the procedure. In other business, commissioners:

- Signed a business associate agreement from the law firm Shook, Hardy and Bacon with Kansas Counties Association Multi Lined Pool covering confidentiality under federal law.

Dan Sturgill with High Plains brought Ken McVay of Norcatur and Melva Pulec of Phillipsburg to introduce them to the commission-

The agency also has a clinical psychologist who comes to Oberlin when needed, he said. There are also two child case managers who work in the area. The county pays the agency around \$24,000 per year for the service.

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'85 Nissan 300 ZX.....	\$2,495	'01 Jeep Grand Cherokee.....	\$16,900	'97 Chrysler Cirrus.....	\$3,995
'86 Jeep Grand Wagoneer.....	\$8,900	'92 Ford F-150 2x4.....	\$2,495	'94 Plymouth Sundance.....	\$1,495
'98 Jeep Grand Cherokee.....	\$7,900	'96 Buick Park Avenue.....	\$4,895	'96 Pontiac Bonneville SSE.....	\$6,995
'00 Pontiac Bonneville.....	\$11,500	'79 Chrysler Cordoba.....	\$399	'78 Toyota Motorhome.....	\$4,995
'94 Lexus LS 400.....	\$8,995	'02 Honda Accord EX.....	\$18,900	'97 Ford Aerostar AWD.....	\$4,995

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