

## Oberlin schools cut jobs to save money

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The Oberlin School District cut four teachers last week, accepted the resignation of one, cut two cooks and one custodian and reduced six positions to part time to save at least \$378,000 for next year.

Most of the cuts were made at a board meeting last Monday night, but several had been done in recent months.

Before making the cuts, the board looked at different scenarios to get spending down to where the district could make it through next year.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said there are several things that could add to the savings or cause more spending. The biggest unknown is that the district so far is dealing only with staff members whose jobs have been cut. There may be others, he said, who are looking for new jobs.

At the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch school, he said, they already know they will need another special education teacher. The teachers at the ranch can be certified in any area and teach any subject, he said. That is different from teachers in town, who have

to teach in the field in which they are certified.

Room has been saved at the ranch, said Mr. Glodt, and more staff will be assigned there, but until the schedules are done, school officials don't know who that will be. The schedules will be done before classes start in August.

Mr. Glodt said supplemental contracts for coaching and other activities haven't been approved yet. If the district is above or below the target of \$378,000 in cuts, he said, the difference could be handled in supple-

mental contracts.

He said the board has to have letters of intent for the reduction in force delivered by May 1, so there is still time to cut more teachers if needed.

Mr. Glodt said although the salary of each of the staff members is public record, the insurance, taxes and unemployment taxes aren't included in those totals. Ninety percent of the staff has insurance, he said. The district pays for each employee's insurance, but not for family coverage.

Health insurance costs an average \$3,400

for each person, he said; taxes cost \$3,000 and unemployment tax costs around \$250 per employee. These costs aren't included in the salary figures.

Savings for the district include:

- \$70,000 for changes in the special education department, contracting more with the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center. The center will take on salaries of three full time teachers. This year, Rhonda Barth makes \$39,895, Mardi Lohofener \$36,465 and Diana Steinmetz \$36,906.

(See DISTRICT on Page 12A)

## Teachers voice opinions about special education

The Oberlin schools' three special education teachers talked about their jobs, their workload and their concerns, especially for the paraprofessionals they work with, if the board contracts their classes with the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center.

The board decided at its meeting last week to have a "larger buy in" with the service center, which means the center and not the district will hire the teachers and paraprofessionals. Superintendent Kelly Glodt said the arrangement should save the district \$70,000, while all the current employees would be offered jobs with the center.

Teacher Rhonda Barth, who works at the high school, said a representative from the center had proposed that person would teach at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch and the other two would go to the service center.

Everyone would take a cut in salary, and the teachers would lose tenure and any sick or vacation days accrued.

What will this do to the program? she asked. Mrs. Barth said she isn't sure who would be in charge of the case load. The board has discussed a lot of this in closed sessions, she

said, so she doesn't know any of the board's thoughts.

Mrs. Barth said one of her major concerns is that she doesn't want teachers to become paper pushers. She said they have worked hard to get a rapport with the students and a relationship with the aides.

The service center could only guarantee the teachers one year in their home district, said Mrs. Barth.

Mardi Lohofener, who teaches at the grade school, said she worked out of the service center in Glade and understands the money savings, but she said she agrees with Mrs. Barth. Mrs. Lohofener said she doesn't want to see the teachers spend their time on paperwork and not get a chance to actually work with the kids.

If the paraprofessionals are switched to the service center, she said, they will lose their health insurance. The district may lose the aides, though they are extremely good and hard to find.

Everyone has a lot invested in the kids, said Mrs. Lohofener.

From what you are saying, said Board Member Dewayne Jackson, the teachers will just be pushing papers?

(See SPECIAL on Page 12A)

## Improvement group still looking for ideas from folks in area

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The second public meeting for the Lifelong Community Initiative will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 29, in Morgan Theater at The Gateway, giving people a chance to say what they think about things on which Oberlin could improve.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Gateway and the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said organizers hope to get people to agree on what the main weaknesses in community service, business, economic development and health care are and then develop goals to improve them. People will be able to say what they want to see changed and improved, she said.

The initiative committee already has collected information in the areas people see as problems, she said. They now want to get that information out, then get a response from people who use the services.

She said there are a lot of issues in health care, dealing with bed numbers going down at nursing homes and more. There will be a meeting with management of the Good Samaritan Center, Decatur County Hospital and the Decatur

County commissioners at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 8 to discuss those, she said. The meeting will be held in the courtroom and is open to the public.

The initiative has opened the opportunity for some long-range planning to see where the community will be in 10 years, especially with the population still decreasing, she said.

Part of the idea is to come up with a plan to sell the area for people to retire if they aren't able to start a business.

At the first meeting on Monday, Feb. 23, there were around 20 people there. Ms. Grafel said they came up with a mission statement, which is "Through the Lifelong Community Initiative, our leadership committee will create a supportive environment to ensure that in Oberlin and the surrounding areas, every person matters and the welfare and dignity of each individual is valued. This will create an atmosphere where all citizens can thrive and grow with shared responsibility and action."

The group also came up with a value statement: "Area residents

(See GROUP on Page 12A)



A WORK CREW from the Kansas Department of Transportation worked on U.S. 83 south of town last week. One man (above) worked with a machine to rout out the cracks

in the road while another (below) flagged traffic. Later, the men filled the cracks to prepare the road for a seal job this summer.

—Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

## Road work starts

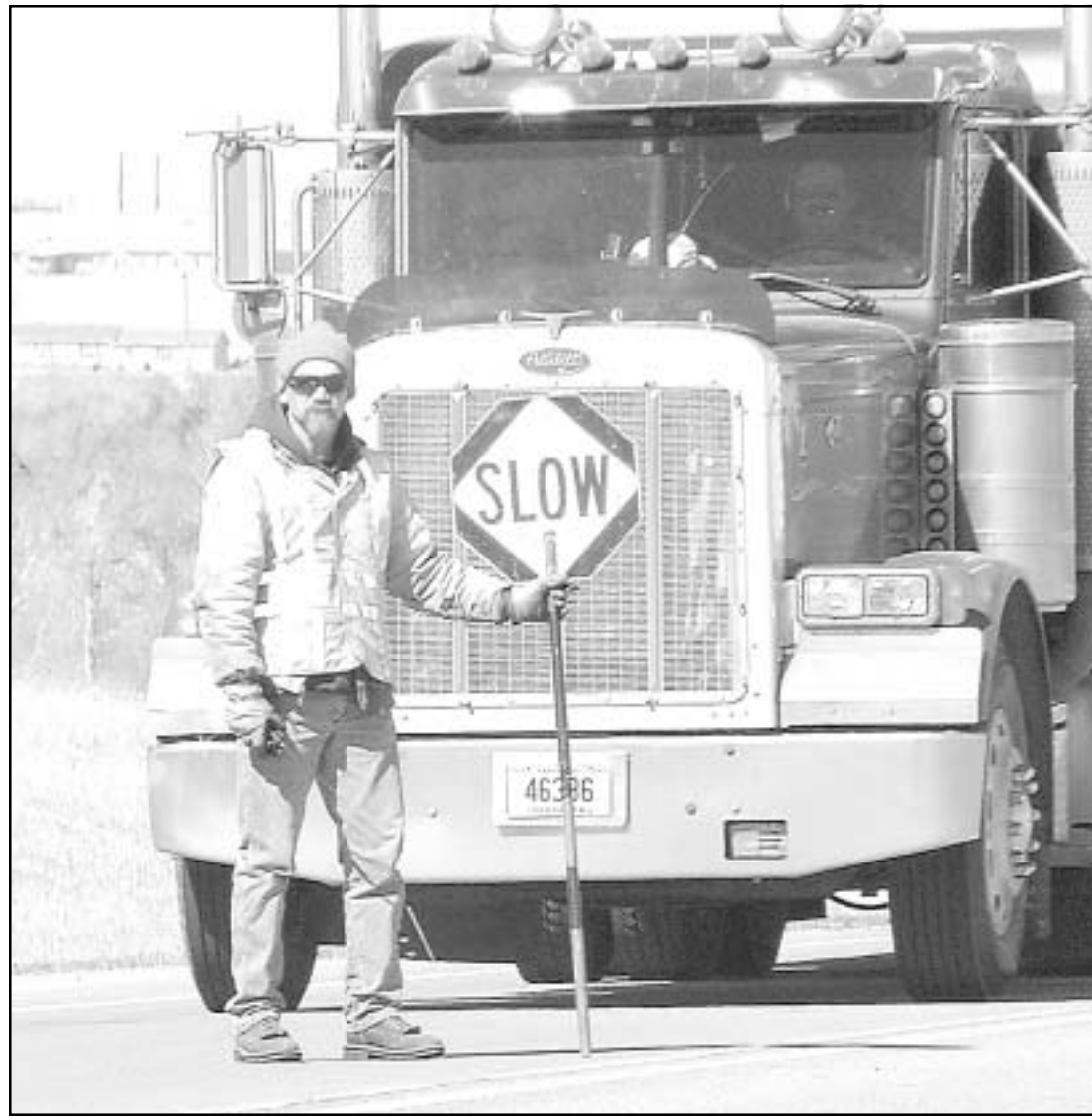
People driving south of Oberlin on U.S. 83 last week had to wait a few minutes behind a flagman because only one lane was open while a Kansas Department of Transportation crew worked on cracks in the road.

Tom Hein, spokesman for the department in Norton, said the crew was routing out the cracks so they could go back through and fill them with a rubberized asphalt sealer. He said dirt, rocks and salt have to be cleaned out of the cracks first so the sealer will adhere to the surface.

Mr. Hein said the job was going to be done from Oberlin about eight miles south of town because that part of the road is getting an asphalt seal job this summer.

The department has several jobs lined up for the two highways going through Oberlin this year.

(See ROAD on Page 12A)



## County asks how full-time person will help

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

After finally learning that the director would still go on every call when he is in town, Decatur County commissioners asked last Tuesday how hiring a full-time emergency medical technician will solve the lack of volunteers on the ambulance crew.

Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy said it would help him because when he is on a run, they need someone on call. If there is a

transport, they need two more people. A full-time person could really help with that. So far, he said, they have been able to cover all the time slots, but he doesn't want there to be a call some day and have no one to answer it.

Mr. Pomeroy said the times that are hard to cover with volunteers are nights and weekends.

Commissioner Doyle Brown asked if one of the active volunteers got the job, would that be a help?

Mr. Pomeroy said he still thought it would help because that person would no longer have a daytime job.

Mr. Pomeroy said it would also help to hire another part-time person and share them with the sheriff's office. That way, half the pay would come out of each budget. Last year, the ambulance and sheriff departments hired a joint deputy, but he since has become the full-time undersheriff.

Mr. Pomeroy provided commissioners with a list of responsibilities for the job at a February meeting. On Tuesday, he gave them another list of things they could do with the department.

One of the suggestions was putting the ambulance office at the station instead of in the courthouse. Mr. Pomeroy said that way, they would be there to work on ambulances at any time. He said (See COUNTY on Page 12A)

## Chamber/radio homeshow Saturday

The Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce and KFNF Radio are preparing for their home show starting at 9 a.m. Saturday.

Chamber Manager Glenva Nichols said she thought the show would have around 30 booths, covering from health products to home decorating, banking, appliances, air conditioning and heating, hardware, gardening and computers and phone service.

The home show will be held in the arena at The Gateway. Mrs. Nichols said there is room for 40 booths.

The booths are \$75 for a 10x10 spot or \$125 for a 10x20 spot. Each person purchasing a spot had the opportunity to pay an additional \$50 for KFNF to mention the names of the businesses on the air several times. Included in that price are live interviews both days.

(See SHOW on Page 12A)

# \* County gets details

(Continued from Page 1A)  
the down side would be less public access.

He said the department has some real positives. With the first-response vehicle, he can get to calls in an average of three minutes while the ambulance takes nine. The radios work well, he said, and it has been a good idea for the commissioners to set aside money every year for a new ambulance.

Mr. Pomeroy said to help out with some manpower needs, he could use prisoners, but there is a limited amount of things they can do and it is a security risk. He said the service could use community volunteers but there could be a problem with confidentiality.

He said they could farm out training, billing and cleaning of ambulances.

Mr. Pomeroy said it would be more efficient to have a computer in each office and then one in each ambulance so paperwork could be done on transports. He said he has no problems with what he has, but this is a suggestion.

A full-time employee would cost around \$30,000, he said. To farm out billing would cost around \$5,000. To hire someone else to do transports, the service would lose around \$20,000 a year, he said, because the service wouldn't be getting paid for the job.

Commissioner Doyle Brown went through all kinds of certifications on the lists, asking what each one was for and if they really needed all of them.

Are you on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year? he asked. Mr. Pomeroy said he is on call unless he is out of town. If there are two people on call, Mr. Brown asked, would you still go to a call?

"If there were 1,000 people on call, I would still go on the primary calls," Mr. Pomeroy replied.

He said he is the only paramedic with the service, and there are times he can administer a drug technicians and first responders can't. If he didn't go on all the primary calls, he said, and something happens, there would always be a question of whether he could have helped.

Mr. Pomeroy said hiring someone isn't about him, it is about being able to answer the bell when it rings. He said the only way to save him time would be to hire another paramedic.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch asked how many life-and-death calls the service gets in a year. Mr. Pomeroy said maybe five to 10.

Is part of going on all the calls to keep skills up? Mr. Hirsch asked. Mr. Pomeroy said yes.

The group talked about some things that had recently been ordered, including a rain coat, traffic cones, trauma pants and a wrench. Mr. Pomeroy said the traffic cones were for a driving course for training, the pants are a uniform purchase and the wrench can open the oxygen tanks and to break into vehicles.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he has wondered for years if they need three ambulances. Mr. Pomeroy said they don't, but it is basically an insurance policy to have a spare.

It is a big concern that even if the county hires another full-time technician, that Mr. Pomeroy will still be on every call, said Mr. Brown. Mr. Pomeroy said although he appreciates the concern, he has been doing this for some time and knows when to step back.

The commissioners didn't make any decision. Commissioner Brown said he wanted to give the idea of moving the office some more thought.

## Only a test



**RESPIRATORY THERAPIST** Deb Klima tried out some new fitness equipment which will be housed in a new fitness and rehabilitation center in the former Duckwall's building in downtown Oberlin. The Decatur County Hospital is planning an open house for the center in April.

# \* Special education teachers speak out

(Continued from Page 1A)

There have been a lot of referrals this year in the district, said Mrs. Barth. In the high school, there are around 45 kids who will be in the special education program in some way. That is a lot for one person to handle. If the teachers are taking care of the paperwork and caseload, the aides will do all the teaching.

At the grade school, said Mrs. Lohofener, there are around 26 students in the program with more coming up from kindergarten. That means there will be roughly 35 to 40 students per teacher, and that is a big case load, she said.

If the case load gets too high, the service center will assign more staff, said Mr. Jackson. Superintendent Kelly Glodt said if that happens, the center will tell the district they need more people.

Diana Steinmetz, who teaches developmental kindergarten, said she has had several parents ask if there is going to be a class next year. She said if there isn't, she doesn't know what to tell them to do, to have their kids go on to kindergarten and have a rough year or to stay at home a year. She said she would hate to see the program go because the kids benefit from it.

Mr. Glodt said the district has received more letters about that issue than anything else.

Each one of the conferences this year, said Mrs. Steinmetz, has ended with the question of whether the class will continue. She said she has 12 students this year.

Mrs. Steinmetz said she works closely with Head Start, and in February they normally start working with parents and talking about the

developmental calls. This year they haven't been able to.

There are five kids coming up who are already on individual education plans, she said.

Understand, said Board President Chris Bailey, that the board doesn't have an easy task. The cuts have to be made and the board prays that they make the right cuts.

Mr. Glodt said to be in compliance with the law, the district could cut two special education teachers, but the kids won't get the service the district or the service center want.

The teachers will lose between \$3,000 to \$5,000 in pay, said Mrs. Barth, and one may lose more than that. The aides won't get insurance with the center.

The service center gets federal money that the district can't get, he added. The district already has a

buy-in contract with the center, and when the schools have a question that no one can answer, the center is called.

The caseloads, he said, will be changed no matter what, because the district will be cutting one teacher.

Mr. Glodt said if they could keep developmental kindergarten the way it is, he feels it is an investment in the kids at an early stage.

The board decided to not make a decision until after holding several closed sessions. It eventually voted to issue letters of intent not to rehire the three special education teachers. The board did decide to keep developmental kindergarten as long as possible. More than likely Mrs. Steinmetz will be the teacher, but she will be hired through the service center.

# \* District saves money with list of cuts

(Continued from Page 1A)

- \$20,464 on cutting counselor Sheila Jansonius to part-time.
- \$34,473 by eliminating teacher Nealee Johnston.
- \$22,539 by cutting counselor Nita Lavielle to part-time.

- \$15,865 by cutting teacher Elaine Marcuson to part-time.
- \$17,307 by accepting teacher Susan May's request to go to part-time.
- \$40,797 by cutting librarian Ashanna Richards.

- \$17,039 by cutting teacher Tina Williams to part-time.
- \$18,632 by cutting school nurse Ruth Wolfram to part-time.
- \$30,465 by accepting teacher Tucker Woolsey's resignation.
- \$53,000 by cutting cooks

Sharon Mockry and Jeanette Diederich and custodian Gloria Schultz. That includes their health insurance and taxes.

On the teachers who have gone to part time, the district will pay only half of the taxes and insurance costs, saving around \$19,950. On the teachers who were cut or resigned, the district will save about the same amount.

The total comes to \$380,481.

# \* Road work planned for summer

(Continued from Page 1A)

U.S. 36 from Oberlin to the Rawlins/Decatur County line will get a conventional "bituminous" seal. Mr. Hein said asphalt is spread on the road to seal the surface, then covered with fine rock.

The seal work will continue south on U.S. 83, he said, for eight miles. The job is being done by Hi-Plains Sand, Inc. out of Kanopolis on a \$340,564 contract.

A slurry seal about an inch thick will be laid on the road from there to the Sheridan/Decatur County

line, about nine miles, then south to the junction at U.S. 83 and K-383, and northeast on K-383 to the west city limits of Jennings.

The job is being done by Ballou Construction Co., Inc. out of Salina, for \$1.1 million.

With the slurry seal, said Mr. Hein, the first layer will be put done and then a drag box will be used to run over the roadway so the seal will fill in the ruts.

Later, a second layer of the slurry seal will be added. The material is a mixture of asphalt, rock and Port-

land cement.

Mr. Hein said the seal work is considered substantial maintenance. It is similar to putting a coat of paint on a house, he said; you have to do it every so often to protect the surface.

A pilot car will be used to guide motorists through the work on both jobs, meaning only one lane will be open for two to three miles at a time.

Mr. Hein said he didn't know for sure what the start dates would be, but the projects will be done in the summer.

# Officers work two backing accidents

In the last month, Oberlin Police officers have reported two backing accidents on private property.

The first one happened around 1:22 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 21, in the Fine Spirits Video parking lot.

Donald E. Thomas, 77, was backing a 1989 Ford Taurus from his parking stall and didn't notice that

another car had parked next to him. It was a 1994 Buick Skylark driven by Kassia Bryan, 14.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said Ms. Bryan has a learner's permit and was with a licensed driver.

There was damage to the front fender of the Thomas vehicle and the driver's side of the Bryan ve-

hicle.

There were no tickets given.

Around 12:28 p.m. on Friday, Vera Lindemann, 93, was backing her 1990 Buick Le Sabre from a parking stall at the Frontier Restaurant when she turned too sharp and hit a 1999 Oldsmobile belonging to Kay Martin, McCook.

# \* Group plans meeting

(Continued from Page 1A)

value openness, friendliness and respect for their neighbors. The successes of our rural communities will be improved by working together to build relationships that project a positive attitude."

Ms. Grafel said the initiative, once it is complete, may help the area get some grants. It is designed to give everyone an opportunity to become involved and it doesn't just have to be just community leaders.

Councilman Jay Anderson brought the program to the attention of the Oberlin City Council and then asked Ms. Grafel to work on it.

At the last meeting, she said, they found out people are really interested in the walking trails at Sappa Park. One man, said Ms. Grafel, was really concerned about emergency medical services and what happens if there is a real disaster.

The fact that the shelter at Sappa Manor is far away from some of the apartments was also brought up.

There are some things which deal partly with the retirement age group that just need to be addressed, she said, like education about how the county bus works.

Ms. Grafel said one idea was to have one number which people could call to get all the information they need.

The meeting will last for two hours, said Ms. Grafel, adding that there will probably be two to three more meetings after this one.

# \* Show features homes

(Continued from Page 1A)

This is the first home show for the chamber and radio station. Mrs. Nichols said. Royce Wilson, who died last year, formerly was in charge of the annual show. The two organizations got together this year and decided they wanted to keep the show going.

It gives people an opportunity to learn about what items are available for their homes, said Mrs. Nichols.

The show will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday. The Gateway staff will be running a concession stand both days.

Admission is free.

**Two Days ONLY at The Dresser**  
**HOME & GARDEN SHOW SPECIAL**  
**70% Off Winter Clothing**  
**20% Off Spring Merchandise**

**9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ~ Saturday**  
**1 p.m. to 4 p.m. ~ Sunday**

152 S. Penn.  
Downtown Oberlin  
785-475-3407

**MONDAY IS MOM NIGHT**  
\$5.99 Large One Topping  
Suggestive sell Extra Topping \$1.00  
(Dine In or Carry Out Only)

**Tuesday Night Kids Eat FREE**  
Purchase Large or Medium Pizza at regular price and get up to two personal pan single topping pizzas free.  
(Dine In or Carry Out Only)

**Wednesday Night in the Zone**  
Purchase Large Pizza at regular price and receive a Pzone for only \$1.99  
(Dine In or Carry Out Only)

*A variety of styles to please everyone...*

**Highway 36 Oberlin, Kansas**  
**Phone 785-475-3638 or 785-475-3689**  
**Dine In or Carry Out — Delivery**

**Public Notice**  
to Residents of Oberlin

**The City Water Department will be Flushing City Water Mains**  
**Wednesday, March 17**  
**Thursday, March 18**  
**at approximately 10 p.m.**

Please be aware that certain amounts of discoloration may appear in your domestic water supply.

*Thank you for your cooperation*  
Gary Shike, City Administrator

**Grand Opening**  
**Wednesday**  
**March 17 — 10 a.m.**

**JUST ON TIME<sup>SM</sup>**  
**Machining - Welding & Metal Fabrications**

**Bob Chick**  
**802 N. Penn Ave.**  
**Oberlin, KS 67749**

**Phone or Fax**  
**785-475-1212**