

Most area school districts lose students

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
Most area school districts continued to lose enrollment this year, except for Golden Plains, which stayed even after a couple of years of growth, thanks to an influx of dairy workers.

Several districts lost around 30 students from last year. Superintendents attribute some of the drop to graduating big senior classes last year and not bringing in large kindergarten classes. The rest of the decline has to do with families moving to find jobs, they said.

Leading the losses were the Norton district, which lost 52 students, and Prairie Heights in Jennings, which lost half its student body. St. Francis and Atwood both reported losing 35 students, Oberlin 15 and Goodland 22.

Jennings lost more than half its students, reporting a decrease of 31.5 students. The actual head count in Jennings is 31 this year. The full time equivalency is 30.5 this year and last year's was 60.5.

Superintendent Dave DuBois said the district will be using last

year's full time equivalency for budget purposes. The board has set a meeting to talk about what to do in the future.

The school system did graduate a large senior class — 12 students — last year, he said, and they lost several families that moved. Others, some of whom still live in the district, are going to schools in Oberlin, Norton, Hoxie or Golden Plains.

The district didn't have enough boys for a football team this year and reached an agreement for three of them to play with the Hoxie team. The district also has an agreement with Oberlin for junior high students to play sports.

There are different reasons, said Mr. DuBois, why each family decided to not have their kids go to school in Jennings. Some thought their kids could get better social interaction at a school with more students. Others decided to move because they don't think the school will be around in years to come and wanted to move when it best suited the family.

In the St. Francis School District,

Jennings' pupil drain acute

The Jennings School Board is starting discussions about what the district will do in the future.

From last year to this the Jennings School has lost 31 students. The district graduated a large senior class and then didn't have very many kindergarten students coming in. Other families pulled their kids out and they are now going to school in Oberlin, Norton, Golden Plains or Hoxie.

The district can use last year's full time equivalency for the budget which was 60.5. The problem is that next year the district will see

the drop in the number which will be a drop in the budget.

No one knows for sure what that means for the school in Jennings, which is why they are planning a meeting with representatives from the Kansas Association of School Boards.

Superintendent Dave DuBois said the meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 14, in Jennings to discuss its options.

He said he ran some numbers for the budget for next year and now they are going to look at choices. Basically, said Mr.

DuBois, they are trying to generate discussion about the future of the school system.

The meeting will be an open discussion of what options there are, he said. There won't be any decisions made. There may be an opportunity for questions.

Mr. DuBois said he would like to have the information the board needs in front of them by January or February so they can make any decisions that need to be made. He said he thinks it is important to have the discussions sooner rather than later.

Superintendent Carl Werner said they are down 35 students from last year, 365 students enrolled last year and 330 this year.

He said they graduated 37 seniors and have 15 kindergartners this year. The district also lost a few stu-

dents here and there through the year and over the summer.

Mr. Werner said he thought the district would use the three-year average for budget purposes, unless the full time equivalency from last year is higher. He said he isn't sure yet.

The last school year, he said, the district cut a lot from the staff. There were four teachers, including him, who were eligible to retire. Each took retirement and all are now working for the district for less money. A cook and bus driver retired and they weren't replaced.

Mr. Werner said they also cut a teaching aide position and the home economics department was cut completely. The teacher was reassigned to be the food service manager since the previous manager had retired.

This year, said Mr. Werner, the district will have to look at things again and see. There are people who are eligible to retire again, and the school board will have to see if they decide to do that.

He said he hopes the district will level off at 300 students and the enrollment won't go much below that.

The Rawlins County School District in Atwood is also down 35 students from last year. Part of the drop, said Superintendent Mark Wolters, is that the district graduated 42 students and there are 22 kindergartners this year for a loss of 20 kids. They lost about 15 out of the middle from families moving away, he said.

Mr. Wolters said the numbers last year included the students gained from the Herndon School District consolidation. Without the Herndon (See AREA on Page 8A)

Despite early rain, dryland corn shrivels in fields

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
Rains early in the summer produced some optimism that the drought might be over, but with the lack of rain the past month and half and temperatures in the 90s and 100s, most of the dryland corn has dried up.

It may have seemed like the fall crop was going to mark a turning point in the drought the area has been under for the last five years, but that didn't happen.

Although farmers are out harvesting, said Brian Olson, Kansas State University agronomist for the area, the crop won't be bringing in the yields that farmers hoped for. Mr. Olson said the area was only 2 to 2 1/2 inches of rain away from getting a good harvest. Instead of getting those last couple of inches, though, it stopped raining.

There was enough moisture that there was going to be a decent crop, Mr. Olson said. The dryland corn stayed green into August, but from the first of August through the beginning of September, the area got little to no rain.

There are some irrigated fields that will produce a decent crop, he added.

Mr. Olson said the way he understands it, the hurricanes along the East Coast are really messing up the weather patterns. Until the hurricanes get out of Florida, he said, this area is basically sitting in a dry weather pattern.

Even though the dryland crop is cooked, he said, farmers will be able to get something out of it. Mr. Olson said he thought most fields would

produce 20 to 80 bushels. It will depend on whether the corn received any rain during the production process. He said it also depends on weed management and the farm's fertility program. Mr. Olson didn't talk about crop insurance but did say he thought some farmers would get some grain out of the fields.

Mr. Olson said it has been four or five years since farmers in this area got a really good fall harvest.

Even though the area stopped getting the moisture and things started to dry out and turn brown, he said, there may be some fields this year that produce better than they have. Some farmers will have a better fall harvest than they did last year.

It is a little disappointing, he said, but that's the way it goes.

Now farmers are concerned about the wheat. There isn't a whole lot of topsoil moisture for planting. Mr. Olson said he has to believe that we will get rain in October, and farmers want to get their wheat into the ground.

Most farmers are going ahead and drilling it into the dry soil, he said. Some of them are planting the wheat a little deeper and getting it into the moisture. He said farmers don't want to plant it too deep, though, because it won't emerge.

There are really no good answers, said Mr. Olson; everyone just has to have faith that the area will get rain.

The only good thing about the recent heat has been that it is moving the milo right along, but it, too, is out of moisture. No one wants a whole lot of these dry, hot days in a row.

Water supply could increase 50 percent

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
With a plan to redrill well No. 9 and put in a new pump house, Oberlin could have 50 percent more water added to the total supply by next summer.

That could ease things for homeowners in the hot months, when the city has been on odd-even lawn watering restrictions the last three years. City Administrator Gary Shike said the increase in water has to help, but if the drought continues, he wouldn't be surprised if the city wouldn't have to still do water restrictions.

Thaniel Monaco, engineer with Miller and Associates of McCook, who is supervising the well work, said he is designing the well to pump 300,000 to 450,000 gallons a day with a variable-speed pump.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the well's production has continually declined over the years. This past year it got worse.

Well No. 9 is an old concrete well, he said. Most these days are lined with stainless steel.

of town and south of U.S. 36, can't be pumped together, Mr. Shike said, redrilling one well and getting a variable speed pump should boost the quantity of water produced.

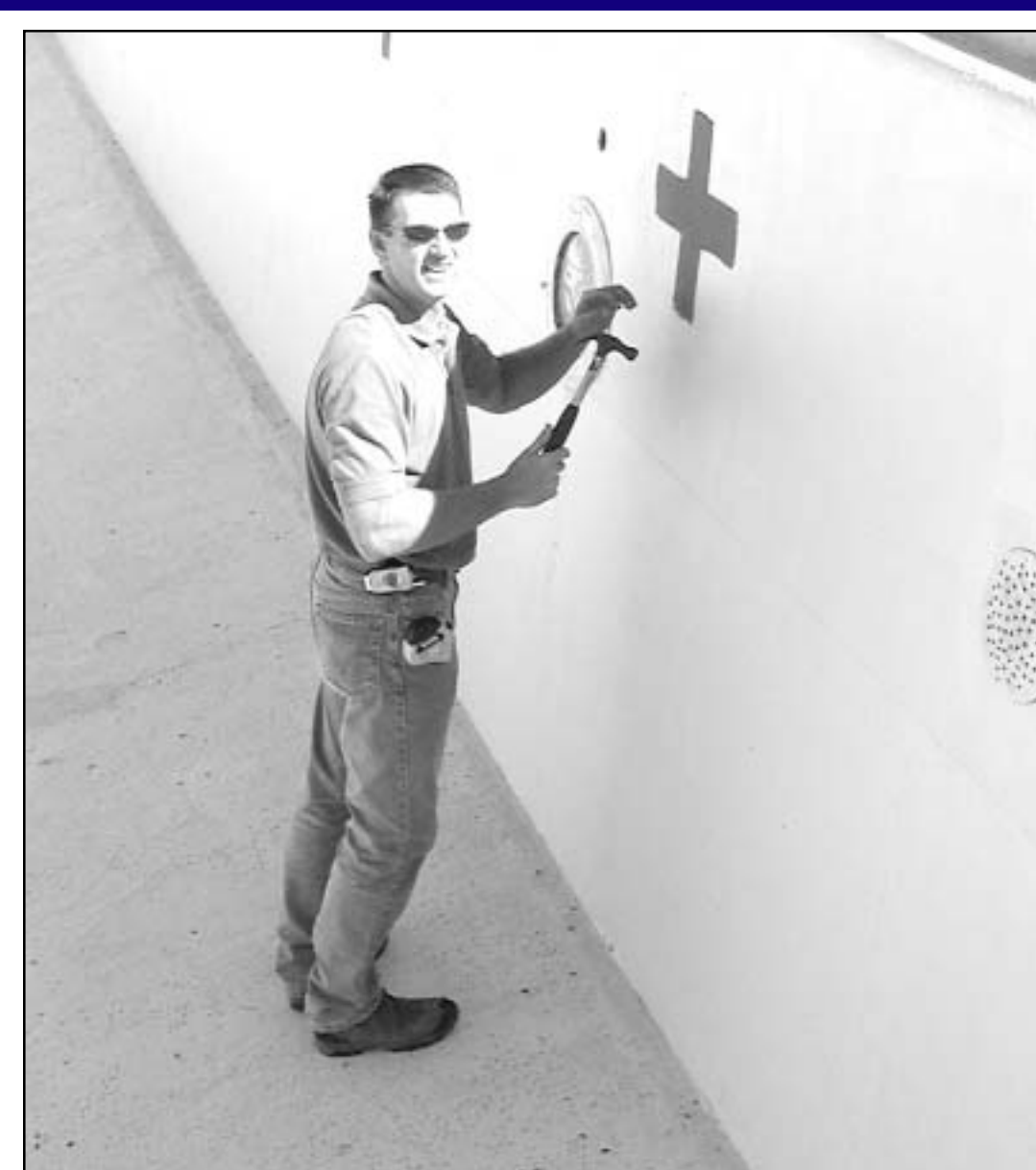
The well will be re-drilled within 50 feet of where No. 9 is now, he said.

Mayor Ken Shobe asked when it would be done. Mr. Monaco said the bid date is Oct. 15. Then they will need to drill the well and build the pump house. He said it will be done by summer.

Mr. Shike said Mr. Monaco wanted to know whether they want a pump down in the well or above.

The city currently can pump 800,000 gallons in a day. The idea of re-drilling No. 9 is to get more water, but Mr. Shike said he isn't really sure how much more Oberlin will get through this project.

Councilman Stan McEvoy asked about the irrigation well the city bought two years ago south of town. The well hasn't been hooked into the water system, partly because it is high in nitrates and shows some ura- (See WATER on Page 8A)



USING A HAMMER, Michael Fisher, an engineer with Water's Edge Aquatic Design, tap tested concrete at the Oberlin swimming pool last Thursday. Mr. Fisher worked in the pool all morning and into the early afternoon, checking for bad concrete and hollow spots.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Man starts pool evaluation

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

An engineer with Water's Edge Aquatic Design arrived here last week to do a "hammer test," starting the evaluation of Oberlin's city pool.

Michael Fisher looked at the pool last Thursday, but said he won't have a report for at least three to five weeks.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he met with Mr. Fisher that day and the engineer told him that plans for the pool will boil down to money and how much people want to pay and for how long. Mr. Shike said the old pool is running on borrowed time, and he thinks everyone knows that.

He said Mr. Fisher said one way to get another three to five years out of the pool is to cut the top off and replace the deck.

The pool was built in the 1950s and there was an addition to the deep end in the late 1960s to early 1970s, he said.

At the beginning of the summer, the pool couldn't open on time because it wasn't holding water. The city sent the blueprints to Water's Edge, and the firm suggested a solution. The pool was filled and then opened for swimmers.

Although it normally stays open through Labor

Day weekend, this year the pool closed two days early because water was lost while the sand filter was being backwashed. Since the heating boiler failed in mid-July there was no way to warm new water, and the city just closed the pool.

Mr. Shike said Mr. Fisher noted that the pool isn't completely level. At the deep end, he said, the top is an inch and a half lower than at the shallow end. It means there won't be an even overrun into the scum gutters.

Mr. Fisher used a regular hammer and lightly tapped the walls and floor of the pool. When testing the pool with the hammer, he said, it should make a ping noise. While most of the pool sounded that way, some parts had more of a thud noise that sounds somewhat hollow.

The wall in the deep end, below where the low dive is supposed to be, had that thud noise. There were some parts in the floor that sounded that way, too.

Mr. Shike said Mr. Fisher said he didn't know if it was erosion of dirt or if the concrete was old. Mr. Fisher said he won't know until he does a core test.

Mr. Fisher said in the wall under where the low (See POOL on Page 8A)

Council to talk about sewer

The Oberlin City Council will meet at 6:30 p.m. Thursday to continue discussions about the city's waste water treatment facility.

Over the last year or so, the council has been making decisions and looking at borrowing options to put in a new waste water treatment plant that meets revised state and federal regulations.

The council had decided to go with a newer mechanical plant. Af-

ter a recent meeting with state agencies city officials had to attend to get a Community Development Block Grant for the project, however, a representative from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment came here to talk about a lagoon system. At the council meeting Thursday, Sept. 2, the council discussed if the city should go to a lagoon system.

There were no decisions made at

the meeting. The council asked for public comment.

At the council meeting Thursday those discussions will be continued. City Administrator Gary Shike said there are some things the city can't proceed with until the council makes a decision on what to do.

The meeting will be held upstairs in The Gateway and is open to the public. It will be aired on local access channel 7 on Oberlin cable.

How to handle media

Emergency folks learn at seminar

County commissioners, emergency medical technicians, law enforcement officers, nurses and health department personnel from around the area joined last Thursday to learn how to work with the media in times of disaster.

The all-day conference brought people from Decatur, Cheyenne, Phillips, Thomas, Graham and Rawlins counties to The Gateway in Oberlin.

The conference on Risk Communications was sponsored by the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments.

In the morning, attendees learned how to work with the media. Pat MacDonald, a former spokesperson and director of health education for the Sedgwick County Health Department, said the workshop is about communications and enhancing the working experience with both print and broadcast reporters.

Radio and television people want something short they can put on the air, she said, something that is nine seconds long.

Many times, said Ms. MacDonald, the media wants to hear about failures. They don't want to hear the success stories.

What the media does want to run stories about, she said, are babies, beasts — meaning animals — and beauties.

The media always wants to show the other side, she said. For example, if some people suggest fluoridation and a lot of people are for it, yet a small fraction disagree, the media will make it seem like it balances.

Ms. MacDonald holds a Master of Arts in communications from Wichita State University, although she said she got it some time ago.

She asked the attendees to tell her qualities of reporters. Some of the words they came up with were aggressive, investigative, persistent, rude, arrogant, egotistical, opinionated, biased, impatient and pushy. Reporters' goals don't meet our goals, said Ms. MacDonald. County officials want to be correct and thorough, but reporters want to win the Pulitzer Prize or get their story on the network news.

Ms. MacDonald said the workshop is really geared towards dealing with big broadcast stations and city newspapers.

"We are assuming," she said, "when a big-time situation happens, big time media will show up, and you will have a microphone in your face."

When you agree to be interviewed, she said, you do have some rights. Ms. MacDonald said never to say no comment; that makes the reporters' adrenaline pump. They'll want to try to get to the bottom of things. She said there is always an answer. (See CLASS on Page 8A)

* Area sees decline in enrollments as down

(Continued from Page 1A) students, he said, there would have been even fewer students this year. Part of what helps with the consolidation, he said, is that the new district can keep the combined budget for four years. The declining enrollment doesn't really affect the budget for this year, he said, but after the four years it will be a significant factor.

By the time the budget is set on actual enrollment, he said, there will be a lot fewer teachers because of retirement. Mr. Wolters said he doesn't see the district needing to make a lot of cuts this year.

The district won't see any leveling off in enrollment for several more years, he added.

The Oberlin School District lost 15 students from last year to this year. Superintendent Kelly Glodt said they knew the district would lose 22 students based on seniors graduating and kindergartners coming in. The decrease wasn't as large because of students picked up from the Jennings and Herndon School Districts.

Total enrollment for the district is 448 students. The full time equivalency is 427.5, although the district will use last year's full time equivalency, 442, for the next budget. Oberlin cut back more than seven jobs last year.

The Norton School District has lost 52 students since last year. Superintendent Greg Mann said the head count was 755 last year and this year it is 703 students.

Families are smaller these days, he said. People don't have as many kids, which means there aren't as many enrolled. Some families have moved away, he added.

Mr. Mann said they will probably be taking a hard look at the numbers and budget this year. A couple of positions have been reduced as people have retired, he said, but so far the district hasn't had to look at any other cuts.

The Goodland School District lost 22 kids since last year. Superintendent Marvin Selby said this year is a little different. There are 79 kindergartners and the senior class has 63.

The numbers are preliminary, he said, since the Goodland schools have only been in session for a short time.

The district based the budget on a decrease of 30 kids, he said, but if the decrease is only 22, then most likely the district will use the three-year average.

Mr. Selby said unless they get some kind of business in the area to provide jobs and opportunities for young people, the decline in students and families will continue. The farm economy is what the area is all about, he said, and when that declines, then the farmers don't drive tractors and don't need new parts. The area really needs to get some moisture, he said, and the farm economy needs to turn around or the numbers will continue to decrease.

Superintendent Roger Baskerville in the Golden Plains School District said they have maintained enrollment from last year. The actual enrollment is 196, he said.

Last year, the graduating senior class was larger than the kindergarten class. Mr. Baskerville said they picked up students from other districts.

The dairy near Breton is holding steady, which has helped keep the numbers at the school up.

Representatives from the Colby School District could not be reached for this story.

Hospice offers volunteer class

Hospice Services will offer a volunteer training session, "Caring for the Caregiver," at 7 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 27, at the Oberlin Covenant Church.

Hospice Services provides end-of-life care, supported by Medicare, Medicaid and other insurance carriers. The agency depends on donations to cover costs of care beyond what those pay.

A workshop was held last week at The Gateway in Oberlin on "Clinical Aromatherapy and Touch Therapy," with support from a gift from the Lois Steiner estate.



AT A CONFERENCE last Thursday, Commissioner Doyle Brown (above) worked on his "ice breaker" sheet, which held fun facts about Kansas. Pat MacDonald (below) taught the first two lessons on what news is and "Media Friend or Foe." A handful of Decatur County personnel were at the meeting. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

* Class talks media

(Continued from Page 1A) She said when a reporter is interviewing you, they only care as much as the community cares about the topic. Talking with a reporter is like free advertising, she said. It gets the topic in the paper without having to pay for ad space.

Ms. MacDonald said an official can say no comment without saying "no comment." For example, she said, they can say, "That's under investigation right now. I don't want to speculate until we know the results of our investigation." She said they can also direct reporters to other sources.

If a reporter asks a question about something that the interviewee doesn't want to answer, she said, they can give a brief answer and then bridge to something else.

In the afternoon, the group worked on a mock press conference.

Health Administrator Marilyn Gamblin said she thought the main thing she got out of the conference was how different entities can work



together in a crisis situation, not only how the entities can work together, but also work with the media to their advantage.

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* Pool study begun

Man uses hammer test

(Continued from Page 1A) dive is supposed to be, there has been water leaking into the pool. He said he isn't sure if there is water leaking out of the pool in the same place.

The city could put in a slide now and then move it to a new pool later, said Mr. Shike. It would mean possibly not having the use of one of the small pools.

He said he talked with Mr. Fisher about locations for a new pool. They talked about attaching it to The Gateway, but Mr. Fisher said he didn't really see any place.

Mr. Fisher said that if people want an indoor pool, they should plan on spending at least twice as much as they would for a new outdoor pool.

Mr. Shike said once the engineer's report comes in, it will be given to the pool committee. He said there isn't any city money specifically designated for the renovation of the pool or building a new one at this point, but the pool committee has started raising money.

* Water could increase

(Continued from Page 1A) nium content.

Mr. Monaco said that well won't be ready to be put on the system by next summer. He said there are some pilot programs they can try to clean up some of the contaminants in the water. That testing process alone, said Mr. Monaco, will take a couple of months.

Mr. Shike said he thought the city is leaning towards the pilot program, although they haven't made a decision. With the pilot program, he said, the water is just run through. It can't be used; it is just put into the creek.

If the city finds a way to get some of the unwanted chemicals out of the irrigation well, it still would need to be tied into the municipal system.



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