

Gas prices may double this winter

Energy company says bills already higher here

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

It's no secret that heating prices are going to be higher than they were last winter. The question is how high?

Natural gas prices right now are double what they were last year, said Bob Helm, manager of corporate communications for Midwest Energy. That means that people are going to pay twice the price for the actual gas this year.

Last year, said Mr. Helm, consumers paid \$6.70 for 1,000 British Thermal Units, which means that one "therm" was 67 cents. On a gas bill, he said, use is measured in therms. To estimate how much your heating bills might be this summer, take the amount of therms used last year and multiply it by the current cost.

Right now, he added, gas on the New York Mercantile Exchange is around \$13 per 1,000 BTU or around \$1.30 a therm.

Only 70 percent of the bill, said Mr. Helm, will double or increase because that is the commodity price. Thirty percent of the bill last year was delivery charges, which haven't changed.

So if the bill was \$100 last year, he said, 70 percent or \$70 is going to double and 30 percent or \$30 will stay the same. So the bill this year would be \$170, said Mr. Helm.

Basically, he said, they are telling people to look for gas bills to be 50 to 75 percent higher.

Another thing to remember is that

Tips on how to save energy

With natural gas prices expected to increase 50 to 75 percent over last year, there are some things homeowners can do to help save money and conserve energy.

Here are some tips on how to keep energy costs down this winter:

- Vacuum floor furnace exchangers, space heater heat exchangers and refrigerator coils.
- If an essential area of the house is cold, use a fan to move heat from warm rooms rather than using a space heater or turning up the thermostat.
- Open shades and curtains on (See TIPS on Page 10A)

the price customers pay is going to depend on how cold it gets this winter. The colder the year, the more demand, the higher the price of gas — and the more you use.

If the weather is the same as it was last year, then gas use might be similar. If it is colder, the bills will be higher, but if it is warmer the use will be lower.

Basically, said Mr. Helm, the price of gas has been going up since 2001. It is typical supply and demand. There isn't enough supply for (See NATURAL on Page 10A)

Fall harvest produces crop double last year

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Decatur County's fall harvest is coming in nearly twice as big as last year, with some elevators already full and piling grain on the ground, and it's still going.

In most parts of the county, fall harvest started in September, said Karol Evans, Decatur Co-op general manager, but combines are still rolling. With occasional rains, farmers have had to stay out of the fields waiting for things to dry out.

Now elevators are getting full and milo has been put on the ground in several locations.

Weights ranging from 57 to over 60 pounds per bushel have been reported across the county for corn, milo and soybeans.

At the Decatur Co-op, said Mr. Evans, they have taken in 2 million bushels of fall crops at all of their six locations, and harvest isn't over. Last year in November, the co-op had taken in a little over a million bushels of corn, milo, sunflower and soybeans.

Mr. Evans said he expects harvest to end at all the branches except for Danbury, by this weekend.

So far, test weights on milo and corn have been over 60 pounds per bushel and there haven't been any problems with moisture.

"Harvest has been excellent," he

said.

For the most part, said Mr. Evans, all of the locations have been doing better than last year. In Jennings, they have taken in 228 percent more corn than they did last year. In Herndon, there has been a huge increase, too. The drought the last few years hit those two areas hard, Mr. Evans said.

In Kanona, Danbury, Herndon and Jennings, they are starting to put grain on the ground.

At Hansen-Mueller elevators in Oberlin and Cedar Bluffs, Manager Bill Gotchall agreed harvest has been good. In Cedar Bluffs, he said, the elevator is full and they have been putting grain on the ground. There is just a little bit of room for corn left there, he said.

In Oberlin, the elevator has taken in around 35,000 bushel of milo and 105,000 bushels of corn. In Cedar Bluffs, Mr. Gotchall said, they have around 108,000 bushels of corn and about 65,000 bushels of milo.

The test weights, said Mr. Gotchall, have been good, running 57 pounds per bushel or better.

Hansen-Mueller got their first load around the end of September. The farmers aren't really saying too much, he said, but harvest has been better than it has been.

(See CROPS on Page 10A)

Classes canceled for teacher training

There'll be no classes in Oberlin Schools on Friday because of a teacher training day.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said Kelly Gillespie from the Southwest Plains Regional Service Center, an expert on computerized local assessments, is coming to do the train-

ing. Friday is when he could be here. Since there won't be any school that day, Mr. Glodt said, the scheduled late start next Wednesday has been canceled.

That means school will start at 8:20 a.m. next Wednesday.



A Yabba-dabba-do wins costume contest

FOR HALLOWEEN, Dr. Douglas Fair and his wife Sandy (above) dressed up as Fred and Wilma Flintstone. Their office, complete with Pebbles and Betty, won third place in the costume contest in Oberlin. Payton Cox (right), 2, marched in the Trick or Trunk parade downtown dressed as Strawberry Shortcake. Grady Lohofener (below) kept warm dressed as a chili pepper while he slept through the parade. The Good Samaritan Center staff and residents took first place in the costume contest and Fredrickson Insurance Agency took third.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



County changes hiring policy

The Decatur County commissioners approved a resolution to add volunteers to the list of positions covered by the county's nepotism policy.

A few weeks ago, Sheriff Ken Badsky deputized his wife Jan and Undersheriff Randy McHugh's wife Kristin. The commissioners said since the women were deputized, the county could be held responsible if they were injured while riding in the sheriff's department vehicles.

Sheriff Badsky said when they have to take a woman prisoner somewhere, they need a female deputy, since it is an all male staff now. Both his wife and Mrs. McHugh, he said, could ride along on transports of female prisoners after they were deputized.

Commissioners asked whether that violates the county's policy on nepotism, which bars supervisors from hiring any relative.

Last Tuesday, Sheriff Badsky said he checked into the policy,

County countdown

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Approved a resolution adding volunteers to the positions covered by the county's nepotism policy. Story at left.
- Accepted a policy to allow random drug and alcohol testing for the

rural fire department and emergency medical service workers. Story on Page 10A.

• Gave the go ahead for dirt and concrete work at the parking lot at the Good Samaritan Center. Story to come.

which says that county department heads can't hire relatives. He said he looked up the word hired in the dictionary and every meaning has hire as doing something for a fee. His wife isn't getting paid to be deputized, he said; she is a volunteer.

The biggest concern, said County Commissioner Doyle Brown, is the insurance through the Kansas Counties Association Multi-lined Pool.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said the state has a law which says that an employee includes volunteer officers.

"Then you need to change the nepotism policy to say employee," said Mr. Badsky.

That would be a good idea, to change the policy to include volunteer employees, said Mr. Hirsch, and that is what the commissioners agreed to do.

The resolution was signed and will be printed in *The Oberlin Herald* one time. It goes into effect with after it is published.

Sheriff Badsky was not in the meeting when the commissioners (See POLICY on Page 10A)

Ballots available

Voters who live in Oberlin City limits and did not receive a mail ballot for the Sunday sales of beer and alcohol still have time to contact the Decatur County clerk's office to get one.

Clerk Marilyn Horn, who serves as the county election officer, said there may have been a glitch in the computer program when they mailed out the ballots. Some rural addresses in the city limits may not have received ballots. If a voter didn't receive a ballot, she said, stop by the clerk's office or call her at 475-8102.

All ballots must be in the office by noon on Tuesday. She has received around 250 to 300 ballots so far out of 1,049 sent out.

Drug testing required

Decatur County commissioners decided last Tuesday to require drug and alcohol testing for the rural fire department and emergency medical service workers.

The county already tests people who drive the transportation bus for drugs or alcohol. Now the county can test the fire chief, ambulance director and emergency workers at random for drugs and alcohol.

The plan is for the firefighters and ambulance crew, too, prohibiting them from using alcohol or drugs on the job.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn said the tests will only be done on reasonable suspicion. The firefighters and ambulance workers will receive a copy of the policy with their paychecks.

Commissioners received an update from Blue Cross/Blue Shield on the county's advance life insurance. The county buys life insurance from Blue Cross/Blue Shield for employees who die so that the estate gets the money. The new plan says that an employee with a terminal disease can request up to \$50,000 before they die to help pay for bills and expenses. The county pays for the insurance.

In other business, commissioners:

- Held a 10-minute closed session for non-elected personnel with Bert Cool, emergency preparedness director. There was no action taken.

- Appointed Commissioner Ralph Unger as the delegate for Kansas Association of Counties and Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative for Counties. Mr. Unger also was appointed as the alternate delegate for the Kansas Counties Association Multi-line Pool, an insurance cooperative.

* Crops double last year

(Continued from Page 1A)

At Norcat Grain, the elevator has taken in 450,000 bushels of corn, 55,000 bushels of milo and 150,000 bushels of soybeans.

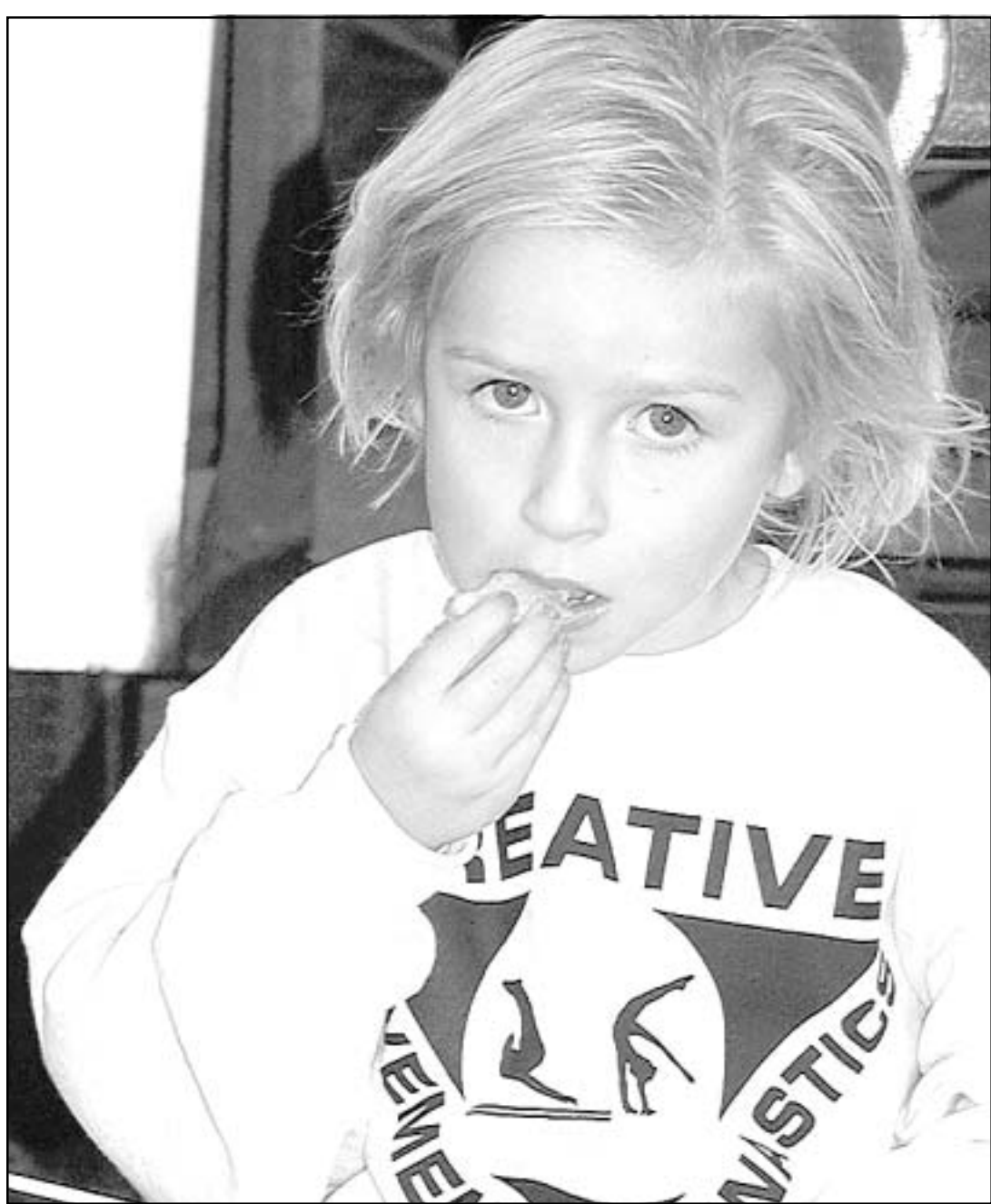
Test weights have been around 60 pounds per bushel.

At D&S Grain in Traer, co-owner Rich Grafel said they aren't taking in milo this year but the corn and sunflowers have been good. Sunflower yields have been good, said Mr. Grafel, and the oil content has been high.

Corn yields, he said, have been better than expected, with weights up to 61 pounds per bushel.

He added that they still have a little room left. Mr. Grafel said the elevator has taken in around 280,000 bushels of corn.

In the Traer area, he said, they started to cut around the second week in September and are about 75 percent done. Harvest has taken a little time with recent rains, he said. Farmers had to wait for fields to dry out.



AT THE HOG ROAST before the football game Thursday, Erin May (above) sat on the curb and ate her dinner while her mother and brother helped serve. Clay Anderson and Michael Wasson (below) talked over the grill. The two men helped organize the event to raise money for improvements to the 4-H livestock facilities at the Decatur County Fairground.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Roast raises money

A group of local farmers raised \$1,300 to help improve the livestock facilities at the Decatur County Fairgrounds with a hog roast before the football game Thursday.

With two hogs donated by Farm Credit of Colby, the group was able to feed just over 200 people in City Park before the game. The meat was cooked by the Oberlin Jaycees, dinner service was donated by Dwight Wentz with A&W and D&M Sinclair Service, and 4-H members helped serve the food along with their parents.

The group served the pork sandwiches, chips, beans, iced tea and water.

All of the money raised will go for the facilities at the fairgrounds.

Michael Wasson and Clay



Anderson helped organize the feed. The group had already raised \$30,000, but wants to get to \$50,000 before starting on the project, which will be a covered arena and new housing for livestock.

The group is asking for weaning-weight steers to be donated to the effort. These will be fed at the Decatur County Feed Yard. The men have 16 steers committed and

would like to get 30. Donations will be taken for the next two weeks.

The men are also taking grain donations. Karol Evans at the Decatur Co-op has set up a "grain bank," with space to store the grain.

Anyone who wants to make a donation should call Mr. Wasson at 475-3596 or Mr. Anderson at 322-5655.

Tour to feature businesses

Reservations are being taken for the annual Business to Business tour, planned for 4 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 13. The idea is to let people know what businesses in Oberlin have for Christmas shopping.

The tour is open to everyone. Call the Chamber of Commerce office at 475-3441 or stop by to make a reservation. The \$6.50 fee includes a soup-and-sandwich dinner at The Gateway after the tour.

The Chamber also is taking reservations for businesses that want to be on the tour. There is no charge.

All reservations must be in by Thursday, Nov. 10.

* Natural gas bills to jump this winter

(Continued from Page 1A) the demand and there isn't enough time to get the supply into the pipeline, so more of the gas is being used while there isn't any more being pulled out of the ground.

A lot of power plants are running on natural gas, he said, and they're using the fuel year around.

There isn't as much natural gas going into storage for winter, said Mr. Helm, and that also has driven the price up.

To help with bills, he said they tell customers to get on budget billing. Virtually anyone can get on budget billing, although they need to be current with their bill. Instead of high bills in the winter and low bills in the summer, the customer pays the same amount all year.

With budget billing, even if a bill goes up, the increase is spread over 12 months, he said. That is the No. 1 thing customers should do.

Another suggestion is to purchase a setback or digital thermostat. Mr. Helm said they can set the thermostat back when they are gone, at work or at night while they are in bed.

If people just can't pay their bills, he said, they need to contact their gas supplier as soon as possible. There are several agencies, including the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and United Way agencies, that can help.

The governor, he said, has started a new website call Warm Help, which helps with energy conservation tips.

The increase in natural gas prices is a national problem, he noted, and even the governor is saying the bills are going to be high. Mr. Helm said they are just trying to keep customers informed so they aren't surprised by the jump.

* Tips to help lower higher heat costs

(Continued from Page 1A) sunny days to catch the sun's heat; close them at night; tape cracks in window glass; make sure windows are locked and storm windows are all closed; if no storm windows, tape plastic over windows; stuff scrap rags or foam around window air conditioners to prevent leakage.

- At night or when away from home, turn down the thermostat.

- If a fireplace will not be used, raise the damper and seal off with insulation, then close damper. Be sure to remove insulation before fireplace is used again.

- Lay a rolled-up rug or towel at

the base of an outside door if leaking occurs.

- Replace or clean furnace filters monthly.

- Fill gaps or cracks where the siding meets the foundation with rags, caulking or scrap material. Twenty-five percent of a home's air leakage occurs at this location.

- Replace the washer in a dripping hot-water faucet, seal outside air penetrations under sinks; take short showers rather than baths; reduce water heater settings to 100 to 120 degrees; use a cold-water laundry detergent and switch from hot water to warm.

* Policy changed to add volunteers

(Continued from Page 1A) made the decision. He went to the annual Kansas Sheriff's Association meeting and was to report back on what other sheriffs have done about the situation.

Under the policy, a department head who wants to hire a relative can ask permission from the commissioners.

Sheriff Badsky said Undersheriff

McHugh is back from Louisiana, where he served with the National Guard.

Mr. McHugh stopped by the meeting and talked with the commissioners for a minute.

Sheriff Badsky said he interviewed two people for a part-time deputy job. Both had a psychological evaluation, he said, and he plans to hire one.

Pheasant banquet set

Only 1/12 weeks remain until pheasant season kicks off, and the Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever has changed its annual banquet back to Friday, Nov. 11.

Mike Ferguson, president with the chapter, said the banquet will start around 5:30 p.m. at The Gateway. Tickets will cost \$20 for adults and \$10 for kids, which includes a prime rib dinner.

The banquet will feature live and silent auctions. Mr. Ferguson said Johnson Realty will do the auction this year. There will also be door

prizes and raffles for men, women and kids.

Mr. Ferguson said the chapter decided to focus on youth members, or Ringnecks, this year. Dues for kids are \$5, which can be paid at the door. Mr. Ferguson said the chapter will start a mentoring program this year for young members.

Tickets can be purchased at the door. Pheasant season opens on Saturday, Nov. 12. The chapter had planned to have the banquet that night, but there were too many complaints.

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<p>'94 CHEVROLET G20 CONVERSION VAN V-8, Full Power, Local One Owner, Very Clean, Priced Right.</p> <p>\$3,900</p>	<p>'00 BUICK LeSABRE CUSTOM Another Nice Local Owner, 3800 V-6, CD Player, P. Seat, FWD</p> <p>\$8,900</p>	<p>'97 CHEVROLET TAHOE LT Local One Owner, 5.7 Liter V-8, Leather, Only 34,000 Miles, Super Sharp!!</p> <p>\$12,900</p>	<p>'94 CHEVROLET S-10 REG. CAB 2WD, Local Trade, V-6, Auto, Good Tires, Clean.</p> <p>\$3,900</p>	<p>'99 JEEP WRANGLER 4x4, Soft Top, 5 speed, A/C, New Tires, 51,000 Miles, 4.0 6 cyl.</p> <p>\$11,900</p>

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