

## Education chief answers questions

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The new Kansas education commissioner and the area member of the state Board of Education were met with questions from around 20 adults and the senior class from Decatur Community High School on Monday.

Commissioner Bob Corkins and Connie Morris of St. Francis, who serves on the state board for District 5, answered questions and talked mainly about charter schools in Kansas in a 45-minute session at The Gateway. The senior class rode the activity bus to The Gateway.

Mr. Corkins, the first commissioner who's never been a public school administrator, said charter schools are formed by the local school board. Basically, he said, the board agrees on a curriculum for a charter school, which can emphasize a certain area. There are 26 in Kansas already, he said.

Charter schools can help in situations where there are a lot of low-income or special education students, he said. In some cases, alternative structures for the students to learn need to be addressed. A public charter school, he said, is still state funded.

The commissioner said he wants to make

the Kansas public school system as good as it can be. Mr. Corkins said he and his wife are products of the public school system in Kansas. He said he wants to help make the public schools so good that they are the top choice for people.

Mrs. Morris said charter schools would need to be accredited and home schools would probably not work in this situation.

Several of the high school seniors asked Mr. Corkins and Mrs. Morris questions.

One girl asked why the two were in Oberlin for a such a short time and why they didn't have the meeting at one of the

schools.

Mr. Corkins said it is a short trip because they are stopping at 12 towns in two days, hopping from place to place by air. He said he wants to convey the job objectives of the board. Past commissioners probably haven't come to Oberlin at all, he said, so they are making progress. Mrs. Morris said she picked the location at The Gateway.

The original plan was to have the meeting in the lobby, she said, but it was moved to Morgan Theater.

Another student asked what experience and education Mr. Corkins has to qualify

him to be commissioner, or head, of the Department of Education. Mr. Corkins said the position is appointed by the elected Board of Education. When the board hired him, he said, they were looking for someone with a broad-based approach. Mrs. Morris said her thinking was that Mr. Corkins' business experience would be a good background, as would his experience in the state Chamber of Commerce and his legal background.

The group discussed science standards for Kansas schools revised this fall by the (See SCHOOL on Page 10A)

## Voters say yes to selling alcohol on Sundays here

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Stores in Oberlin will be able to sell beer and alcohol on Sundays, starting this week, as citizens gave the issue a 28-vote margin in the city's first mail-ballot election.

The vote passed with 386 in favor of the Sunday sales and 358 voting no. There was also one blank ballot.

The Oberlin City Council approved the sale of beer and alcohol on Sundays, but a petition brought the question to a vote. Ballots were mailed out on October 20 and counted last Tuesday.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn, who serves as the county election officer, said the office mailed 1,085 ballots and got 745 ballots back. Mrs. Horn said that's a 69 percent response, which she termed "wonderful."

The turn out was high, she said, especially for a special election. By comparison, the vote in the 2004 presidential election was 73 percent, or 1,794 voters.

Mrs. Horn said no ballots came in after noon, which was the deadline.

One voter came in around 1:30 p.m. to sign the outside of their envelope. Mrs. Horn said that vote didn't count since it was after the deadline.

Although she originally was told the election workers would have to keep some ballots to count after 7 p.m., when the polls normally close, that didn't happen. Mrs. Horn said they were close to being done at 5:15 p.m., so she called the secretary of state's office. She said the official she talked to said they didn't have to stay until after 7 p.m. since it was a mail election.

The workers finished counting and were done by 6:35 p.m.

Mrs. Horn said she left the results on the door of the courthouse and with dispatch. Before leaving, she called Mayor Ken Shobe and Sherry Brown, owner of Fine Spirits, who first approached the council about the change.

The ballots will be canvassed by county commissioners on Thursday to make sure there weren't any errors.

## Business people, officials discuss town's positives

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Around 20 elected officials, business owners, Rotary Club members and volunteers took a positive approach while listing some of Oberlin's pluses during a public meeting last Tuesday night.

Led by Terry and Lance Woodbury, a father-and-son team from Kansas City, the group discussed whether kids were getting what they need here, whether people are engaged in building the community and the "public square."

Terry Woodbury said he owns Kansas Communities LLC and his son Lance helps with the company, although he has a full time job at an

accounting firm. Terry Woodbury said he lives part of the time in Kansas City and also in Leoti, so he said he sees both the big and large communities in Kansas.

Smaller communities, he said, are almost always under attack. They need to be made viable.

The consultants stood in the middle of a circle of chairs filled by people from Oberlin. In front was a white paper flip chart on an easel.

Lance said they approach planning and looking at the future by checking for things that are going right. The key is, he said, to come at this from a different angle. Instead (See GROUP on Page 10A)

## Angel Tree matches givers, youngsters

Parents, friends and family members have exactly one week to get forms in to nominate kids to be on the Oberlin Jaycees' Angel Tree at Fredrickson Insurance Agency.

For the last nine years, the Jaycees have sponsored the tree, which helps match up kids who need a little something extra for Christmas with people who are willing to buy gifts.

A parent, family member or someone who knows the child nominates them by filling out a green form that can be picked up at Farmers Bank and Trust, First National Bank, Raye's Grocery or Fredrickson Insurance. Those forms are turned in to Jaycee Abby Hissong at the insurance agency. She fills a card with the child's sizes and needs, but without their name, and hangs the cards on the tree. People come in and pick up a card and bring back wrapped Christmas gifts for the kids.

So far, said Mrs. Hissong, they have 17 names for the tree, ranging from 16 months to 16 years old.

To be on the Angel Tree, kids must be 17 or younger.

Last year at this time, she said,

there weren't any names on the tree.

Mrs. Hissong said she talked with a representative at the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services this year and they mailed out forms to people on their lists. Several of those forms have come back in.

People are remembering to get the forms in earlier this year, she said, and that's good since a lot of the people do their shopping the weekend after Thanksgiving.

All the forms need to be turned in by next Wednesday.

The group asks for a few particulars on the form, like the child's and parents' names, address and phone, Mrs. Hissong said, but those are never released to the shopper. The information on the tree includes only the age, gender, sizes for clothes, extra items they need and special requests.

The parents or guardians are asked to pick up the presents on Monday, Dec. 19, or Tuesday, Dec. 20. If someone is unable to pick up the gifts, they will be delivered.

Anyone with questions can call Mrs. Hissong at 475-2696.



GETTING HIS SUPPER during the annual Pheasants Forever Banquet on Friday, Hunter O'Toole, 6, Arkansas City, (above) was ready to eat. Leslie Davis of Burlington,

Colo., had a successful day Saturday as she bagged her bird.

—Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes and Dave Bergling

## Hunters flock to area for opening of pheasant season

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Pheasant season opened with a bang in Decatur County as men, women and children headed out bright and early Saturday morning to bag some birds.

For what is probably the most popular hunting season in the county, people travel from Colorado and other states for the opening weekend. Many will return during the season, which ends Jan. 31. Hunters traveled with friends and dogs, many to return to where they have hunted on for years.

At Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, co-owner Joe Dejmal said they had a busy weekend, with hunters coming in to get ready to go out and then returning to buy more ammunition.

It seemed, said Mr. Dejmal, that business was pretty much the same as last year, although he thought some got their licenses on-line this year.

The store stayed open until midnight Friday, allowing hunters to come in get their supplies. On Saturday, he said, they met some at 6:30 a.m. and stayed open until 8 p.m. On Sunday, said Mr. Dejmal, they opened from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Mr. Dejmal said they got positive reports from hunters. They saw quite a few birds and there

were some who shot their limits on Saturday, even with the wind blowing hard. He said they did hear some complaints about the wind.

Ken Badsky said he went out Saturday with six other guys. The wind was really blowing, he said, and the temperatures were a little warmer than they would have liked. He said they saw a lot of birds and came home with seven.

On Sunday, said Mr. Badsky, and the weather just wasn't the best for the birds. It seems the birds are going out early to feed, he said, and are spread out more than normal.

There needs to be a snow or some cold weather to get the pheasants to bunch up together, he said.

The men hunted without a dog both days. Mr. Badsky said they needed to have a dog to help flush and retrieve birds.

He said it seemed like they would get a shot, but the birds would go down and then start running.

Before the season started, he said, he saw a lot of pheasants and he thinks the numbers and the hunting will be better than they were last year. State biologists say their summer count was up 42 percent over last year.



## Wildlife group works to improve park

The Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever took on a new project this year, leasing farm ground at Sappa Park, planting wildlife food plots and working to get the ground into the federal Conservation Reserve Program.

Ken Badsky, chapter treasurer, said they decided to work on the park because they wanted to make it more user friendly and help draw people to town. He said the group wanted the project to be a positive thing for the city.

Members planted around 45 acres of food plots for wildlife, he said, and are working on getting some of the ground into the reserve program as habitat for pheasants.

The lake bottom, which also is farmed, is open for public hunting.

Mr. Badsky said for opening weekend, though, the chapter sold a package for the park at its banquet Friday night. The bidders had the park to themselves for opening day. Now, said Mr. Badsky, the

(See PARK on Page 10A)

## Looking through the shops

# \*School officials visit Oberlin for short stay

(Continued from Page 1A) board to cast doubt on the theory of evolution. Mrs. Morris said the board's goal is to instill critical thinking in students. One of the students noted that businesses have said they won't come here because of the science standards.

Mrs. Morris said she also hears that people say Kansas is on the leading edge in science. Federal law requires the state to have a non-ideological, secular science standard, she said. Everyone needs to appreciate that instead of making an emotional response, she said.

If they are just guidelines, said Bob Strevey from Norcat, what do you do about teachers who just look at it as guidelines and don't teach it. The next step is to test students for state standards, he said, and there might be model lesson plans that the state might give to teachers.

Mrs. Morris said she is a strong advocate for local control by elected school boards. Part of the accountability of what teachers teach falls on the administration hired by the boards, who are voted into office by the people, she said.

"I don't want us intruding on what you do locally," she said.

The group discussed the fact Kansas students rank high on national tests while at the same time teacher salaries are low. Mr. Corkins said he thinks they need to do better on the salaries.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell, who was in the audience, said there is around a \$15,000 a year difference in pay between Johnson County teachers and those in St. Francis.

Over the last few years, the

Oberlin School District has had to make budget cuts, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt. When doing that, he said, he researched what other districts in Kansas were doing to save money. Some of the schools were turning down the heat on their indoor swimming pools, where schools in Oberlin don't even have air conditioning. Are there any plans or ideas to unite the small and large schools in Kansas and make them more equal? he asked.

The students' best interest, said Mr. Corkins, should come first, and the bricks and mortar should be less important. There are federal dollars for charter schools and then after that, the money in the state goes to the classrooms.

This commissioner, said Mrs. Morris, is aware of rural schools and their problems.

Mr. Corkins said he is trying to encourage innovation and approach ways to improve the results schools get.

Rep. John Faber of Brewster, a former school board member, said he has been an advocate of charter schools for six or seven years, but there isn't a lot of interest in rural Kansas.

Most charter schools that have been successful deal with the Internet, he said, adding that he thinks charter schools are a viable option.

Mr. Glodt said he gives the commissioner and board member credit for coming out and talking with people. The students had a lot of well thought out, good, intelligent questions, he said.

He added that he wasn't sure if charter schools are the answer here.



**LOOKING OVER THE MERCHANDISE** in Fort Sappa Creek Antiques, Becky Vollertsen of Ward Drug was among the 45 business people who viewed merchandise at various shops on the annual Business-to-Business Tour on Sunday.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

# \*Group focuses on town's assets

(Continued from Page 1A) of looking at failures and things that didn't work or opportunities the community missed out on, look at the assets and build on them.

The men had the group from Oberlin pair off to discuss the first question, whether kids are getting what they need, which included a healthy start, caring adults, safe places other than school, marketable skills and volunteer service.

The teams discussed things that stood out in each category and then reported to the group.

Kelly Glodt, superintendent of the Oberlin School District, said he thought Oberlin does a good job of getting kids off to a good start. The schools offer pre-school, Head Start and early childhood training, he said. Everyone comes together to take care of kids when they are young.

Kids can volunteer at the home-owned carnival each summer, said Jay Anderson, a city council member.

Other volunteers' suggestions were the schools' annual Halloween Clean-up and working at the retirement homes.

Some of the safe places suggested were Teens for Christ, Sunflower Cinema, nonschool sports like little kids football, wrestling and cheerleading, summer swim team and the summer recreation program.

Next the group discussed whether people are engaged in building the community, welcoming newcomers, voting, interacting with elected officials, neighboring, celebrating and responding to needs and opportunities.

Charles Frickey, a lawyer and former mayor, said he thought the elected officials were open to sug-

gestions, and many agreed. He said as far as celebrating the community, there is the alumni banquet. Others suggested the home-owned carnival and the beach party on Main Street.

There is a group, said City Administrator Gary Shike, who get together to have a dinner to welcome newcomers.

Terry Woodbury said the public square is where health and human services, business, education and government join. It takes all four to get the job done. Some examples are Rotary, the fair and the economic development board.

From listening to this group, he said, it sounds like Oberlin is in good shape. The community has some assets, but some issues, too. It is all about the attitude, he said.

Mr. Woodbury said he and his son would come here and do interviews, have community conversations and meetings, and then a retreat with some suggested leaders.

All of that could be done for \$3,000, which groups here would raise.

Then if the group decided to push forward, he said, it would need to raise \$15,000 in six months. Of that, \$7,500 would come from the Kansas Department of Commerce, although the group would need to apply for the grant.

Mr. Woodbury didn't promise concrete results in the end. He said basically this program is a lifestyle. The nature of a successful community means that goals need to be reviewed and kept current.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Economic Development Corp., said the board would talk about the program at its meeting tonight and see if they want to move forward with it.

Samway Floor Covering  
4 x 16  
oh/adv  
Spot blue  
ad in GDN

# \*Park has hunting open to the public

(Continued from Page 1A) park is open to anyone who wants to hunt.

The group asks if a person does hunt at the park, they sign in at the orange box along the road to the park. That way, others who want to hunt or walk know what's going on. It is for safety reasons, said Mr. Badsky.

There aren't any other plans for the park as of now, he said.

Money raised at the banquet will help with things the chapter wants

to do at the park, although he said he wasn't sure how much they raised. Mr. Badsky said the chapter sold 343 dinners. He said things went well and they had a lot of out-of-town visitors and local support.

Mr. Badsky said the chapter is looking for a president and vice president for next year. Anyone who is interested can contact him or Dr. Richard May, who is the secretary. He said they are also looking for people to help organize the banquet next year.