



**MONDAY MORNING** Gary Zodrow (above) pulled boxes across Commercial Street from storage to Raye's Grocery Store as the snow fell and wind whipped. Sunday night, Main Street (below) seemed to glow from overhead lights as the heavy snow came in.  
— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis and Cynthia Haynes

## Storm closes county

**By KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
Snow and wind shut down Decatur County on Monday, leaving kids out of school, workers at home and motorists stranded in Oberlin, Jennings and Norcatour. The storm started around lunch time Sunday as rain, turning to snow later. Between 4 or 5 p.m., the flakes were big and wet and started to accumulate on lawns. By evening, the wind was whipping and snow flurries were falling in every direction. Superintendent Kelly Glodt called off school for Monday on Sunday night. School was also canceled on Tuesday. After lights flickered several times, power went out in town about 9 p.m. City Administrator Gary Shike said City Foreman Dan Castle and Lineman Ron Beneda went out in the storm Sunday night to get the power back on. Mr. Shike said Mr. Castle said he saw a lot of firsts, problems that he'd never seen before. At no time, said Mr. Shike, did the crew have to generate power here for the town. The men succeeded in getting power on to most Oberlin homes, but some still didn't have electricity Monday morning. Mr. Shike said people in southwest Oberlin didn't have power Monday morning and the crew



was back out with the bucket truck trying to fix it. With ice covering the five to six inches of snow all over town, the going was a little slow. Many who tried to get to work first thing in the morning got stuck and ended up going home. Most businesses were closed. The banks, including First National Bank, Farmers Bank and Trust and The Bank, were all open for the day. Jesse Carter at Farmers said they were open at 7:30 a.m. and planned to stay open all day. Gary Walter said The Bank was planning to close around 1 p.m. and workers at First National Bank thought they would close early. Raye's Grocery opened up in the morning. Owner Kirk Brown said the grocery is always open to help customers. There are people who will come to the store because they need baby formula or diapers or

something else, so the store is there to help them. Mr. Brown said they did plan to close early, at 6 p.m., to make sure the workers could get home safely. Early Monday morning, Under-sheriff Randy McHugh was out rescuing people who got stuck. Later, the county road and bridge department started to open up emergency snow routes. Around 11:30 a.m., dispatch sent firemen out to pick up truck drivers stuck north of town U.S. 83. Roads were closed all over the area Monday because of the snow and strong winds. U.S. 36 was closed from Norton to Cope, Colo., K-27 from Nebraska to Sharon Springs and U.S. 83 was closed from Oberlin to Selden, and also north of Oberlin. Three shelters were set up for stranded motorists. The Gateway,

said Mr. Shike, was opened Sunday night for two men who were stuck in town. He said he let them in around 11:30 p.m. Kent Ploussard from The Gateway staff walked to work Monday morning to cook for travelers. Some of the stranded motorists checked into motels. At the Oberlin Inn they were full and still had people staying Tuesday night. The Frontier Motel, too, had stranded motorists. Gary Anderson, owner of the LandMark Inn, said he had 19 people who stayed Monday night. Some had to sleep on beds in the basement because the inn was full. One family passing through arrived at 3:30 a.m. Monday after traveling seven hours from Norton to Oberlin. Two families spent the night in (See STORM on Page 8A)

## New center gets loan to help start

### Money helps committee buy building and operate

The Business Enhancement/Entrepreneurial Center in the former The Bank building at 104 S. Penn has received a \$70,000, 10-year loan with 1 percent interest from Prairie Land Electric Cooperative Inc. Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said board member Greg Lohofener wrote the proposal for the loan. The total project for the center cost \$90,000, she said. The corporation put in \$20,000 and the loan covered the rest. She said they spent \$50,000 on the building and have \$20,000 for equipment, including a computer and copier for public use. She said there is another \$20,000 set aside for operating costs, including heating, water and electric bills. The idea of the center is to help bring in small businesses that can't necessarily afford all of the startup costs. This way they have a space to get started, she said. Mainly it is for more technical stuff like computers and the like. She said most of the businesses there either deal with computers or sell things on the Internet. One of the first places to open, 2BCreative, not only works with computers but fills the needs of an office supply store. Naturally Girlie, a vintage clothing store, used technology to expand its business, said Ms. Grafel. The store will also have a retail presence. The Chamber of Commerce office is in the center and Ms. Grafel has an office there. That way, she said, the center has someone present most times. There are 12 suites available, with some businesses needing two spaces. Anyone interested in a spot in the center should call Ms. Grafel at 475-2901. They need to submit a proposal to the Economic Development board for approval, she said.

## Tickets on sale for home tour to be on Sunday

There is still time to purchase tickets for the Decatur Professional Home Tour on Sunday. Tickets cost \$12 a piece and are available from members or at The Dresser, The Oberlin Herald and Flowers by Lee. Each person who buys a ticket gets to tour four homes and the museum. The homes include those of Preston and Peggy Pratt, Kevin and Jeanie Unger, Gary and Marsha Richards and the Good Samaritan Center. Mrs. Pratt said their home was built in 1906 and has been owned by only three families. The house was originally built by the town dentist, Dr. H. G. Morrison, then by it was sold to Florence (Keisner) Petersen, and then to the Pratts. She said they have lived in the house at 302 N. Penn Ave. for 11 years. The home boasts original woodwork and the original lights which were some of the first gas powered lights in Oberlin. The house still has the coal buckets in the basement. There used to be a place in the driveway where past owners would put liquor. Mrs. Pratt said they covered it with cement. Under the yard, there is a basement room, similar to a storm shelter. Although the home is 101 years old, it has walk-in closets in the bedrooms, said Mrs. Pratt. The home has four bedrooms with a game room in the attic. Since the Pratts have moved into the house they have taken the floors back to hard wood, put in new carpet, finished the attic, put in new heating and air conditioning, built a garage, deck and added landscaping. Mrs. Unger said their brick home was built in 1955 by the Kump family. The Unger family moved into the home at 208 N. Griffith in 1996. The entire home, she said, has hardwood floors. The upstairs has finished hardwood floors and on the main floor they have taken up the carpet and plan to refinish the floors. Since the Ungers moved in, they have redone the bathrooms, redecorated and done a lot of landscaping. Mrs. Unger said the upstairs of the house is done in a western theme and the rest will be filled with Christmas decorations. After the tour, everyone is invited back to the United Church for a soup supper, complete with homemade desserts. The tour starts at the church at 3 p.m.

## Travel group seeks regional promotion

Members of the Northwest Travel Council are getting ready for the Kansas Sampler Festival to be held in Garden City in May. The members, which represent around 12 counties in northwest Kansas, met at the LandMark Inn last Tuesday. Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Economic Development Corporation, said usually 12 counties are represented at the monthly meetings. She has been going to the meetings for 10 to 12 years. The idea of the group, said Ms. Grafel, is to promote the region together. They go to trade shows together, as well as the Sampler Festival. The group talked about its idea for a booth at the Sampler Festival, which they will do together in a large tent. They want to make it possible for people to walk into the tent and, if they are really into history or culture, find out everything they want to know about this part of Kansas. For the county booths, said Marci Penner, with the Sampler Festival, you can put a booth together early and put it in a window downtown to help promote the town. Tourism needs to be a community-wide thing, she said. To promote tourism, said Mrs. Penner, communities are going to have to try to do things differently. Normal promotions, which towns have always done, should be thrown out the window. Communities and regions should do things to promote themselves with things that are real. "We should do the best we can at being us," said Mrs. Penner. Besides promoting the region at the Kansas Sampler Festival, Ms. Grafel said they do the Northwest Kansas hunting guide each year. Oberlin takes out a full page of ads in the publication each year.

## Christmas giveaway in full swing here

Christmas on Us is in full swing, with red tickets being handed out daily at participating stores. Last week six tickets were drawn for instant prizes of \$50 in scrip money. Tina Meitl was the only person to claim her prize. She got her ticket from Raye's Grocery. Two of the unclaimed tickets were also from Raye's Grocery, one from Addleman Drug Store, one from Ward Drug Store and one from Southwest Implement. In this week's ad there are eight winners for instant winners to find. Winners have until noon on Monday to claim their money for this week because of the snow storm which delayed the newspaper. With each ticket, customers get another chance to win the grand prize of \$1,500 in scrip money to be spent with sponsoring Oberlin merchants. For every \$10 spent at a participating business, a customer gets one ticket. Anyone can get one free ticket a week from *The Oberlin Herald* and

the Chamber of Commerce office, so no purchase is required to win. All participants must be 18 or older. Newspaper employees and their relatives are not eligible to win. Employees of sponsoring businesses can't collect tickets from their place of employment, but can participate at other stores. The final drawing will be held on Saturday, Dec. 17. At that time, the grand prize will be given away, along with the \$500 first prize, as well as any unclaimed \$50 instant winners. This year's sponsors for Christmas on Us are: Addleman Drug Store, Ward Drug Store, Stanley Hardware, Raye's Grocery, Oberlin Mercantile, the Dresser, Shear Creations West and Day Spa, the Carpet Center, the Bank, Countryside Veterinary Clinic, Rocking R, Prairie Petals, Fidele Electric, Home Planning Center, Culligan, Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Flowers by Lee, Ampride, Lifetime Eyecare and R&M Service Center.

# \* Storm closes businesses, roads and schools here

(Continued from Page 1A)  
their cars on Sunday and the county dug out enough to rescue them on Monday. Their cars were still buried, however.

In Jennings, the Senior Center was open and in Norcaturn the educational building of the Norcaturn United Methodist Church. Both had travelers who were waiting for the storm to pass.

Around 4 p.m. Monday, said Mr. Shike, the city crew realized they weren't going to get power on at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. The staff decided to move the boys into The Gateway. Mr. Ploussard cooked dinner for them, and breakfast and lunch Tuesday.

There were 15 motorists at The Gateway and four dogs, plus the boys.

In terms of damage to city-owned equipment, said Mr. Shike, this was probably the worse storm he has seen in years. There were power poles broken off and being held up only by wires. Street lights are down, laying in the snow, and some Christmas decorations that were already hung were wrecked.

It was an expensive storm, he said. The Norcaturn area received anywhere from four to six inches of snow and strong winds.

"We had 15 inches of wind," said Jim Plotts.

His wife, Carolyn Kelley Plotts, said they had a full house starting Sunday night. She said she and her husband Jim got home Sunday night. Their daughter, Jennifer Auxier dropped them off, and headed home to Oberlin after 9:30 p.m. Mrs. Plotts said Ms. Auxier came back with a car full of stranded motorists, seven in all, a mom, dad, uncle, four kids and two dogs. All camped out with the Plotts at their home.

The family left around 10 a.m. Tuesday on their way to Colorado.

There were 12 people at the educational building of the Norcaturn United Methodist Church on Sunday night. Monday morning, they were taken to the Cardinal Cafe to eat. That night, the families were divided among homes.

Mr. Plotts, who is the town's water and waste water treatment operator, said he discovered around 7:30 a.m. Tuesday that the town was low on water. He went to the pump house and found that there wasn't any power, which meant no water. He called Prairie Land Electric, and the problem was fixed.

In Jennings, Marge Hartzog said they opened the Senior Center and they have had people on and off. The first night, they had a couple and their 15-month-old baby. Mrs. Hartzog said the wife was due on Thursday for a cesarean section.

Others have come and gone for meals, she said, since all of Jennings is without power and has been since Sunday.

Some of the men, said Mrs. Hartzog, have teamed up to check on people and pull others out of the snow. When they went out to work, she said, they always went in pairs and two vehicles at a time.

Basically, she said, the whole town has come together to make sure people have heaters or generators. Food has been brought in and some donated by the town grocery.

During the storm, she said, someone in Dresden was taken into Oberlin by ambulance.

A Dresden farmer started to open the road from their side while the county opened the road from the other side.

Both the courthouse and the city offices in Oberlin were closed Monday. The city offices opened Monday afternoon. The Oberlin Clinic was closed Monday but the hospital was open for emergency and minimal services.

## With a holiday spirit



AT THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, John Wright lit the first candle in the advent wreath on Sunday. The next candle will be lit Sunday.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

## Power outage delays newspaper one day

By Tom Betz  
The Goodland Star-News

Wind was the major cause of power outages in Goodland from Sunday afternoon until Monday night, which meant *The Oberlin Herald* had to delay printing a day.

"We had a lot of things going on," said Rod Blake, power plant superintendent. "The main problem was the wind slapping lines together and taking out our switches and breakers."

Without power *The Goodland Star-News* was closed which meant the presses were closed delaying

*The Oberlin Herald* a day. *The Norton Telegram* was also delayed a day because of the power outages in Goodland.

Normally the newspaper is put together on Monday night and then printed to Goodland. Early Tuesday morning the press crew prints the newspaper and Ella Betts drives to Goodland to pick it up, said Managing Editor Kimberly Davis. Without the power, she said, the decision was made to wait a day for the paper to print.

Blake said the city lost its connection to the Sunflower Electric Power

system about 2:30 p.m. on Sunday. "We got things back up," Blake said, "but we were losing so many feeder lines it opened another breaker with Sunflower and dropped our system. "We never lost the whole city after the original outage, but we had problems with the north, south and central loops which feed mainly from Sunflower.

"We are back on Sunflower and generating part of our needs because of a breaker failure at the plant. We are running a split system, and generating what we can."

He said the city would have to repair some switches on the south loop Tuesday, and they would have to switch the load to get off Sunflower to allow the city line crews to work on the equipment. He said some metering equipment had to be replaced to allow the two systems to be joined again.

He was hoping that would not mean any outages, but that it would be possible there might be an interruption of about 30 minutes while the work is being done on the south loop.

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