



Happy New Year!



THE OBERLIN HERALD

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Feds may check here on security

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Decatur County attorney warned commissioners and the former emergency preparedness director last Tuesday that the county needs to be ready for a Homeland Security audit.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said Homeland Security is doing the audits to make sure money given to counties has been spent correctly. The audits aren't going to be spot, he said, but in depth.

All the county's money, said former director Bert Cool, has gone for equipment like radios. The only problem, he said, might be that the city crew got some of the radios.

The county, said Mr. Hirsch, should make sure that there is a good inventory of the items. Mr. Cool said he will compile a list.

Good, said Mr. Hirsch; the Homeland Security people probably won't be in good humor when they get here.

There is one radio still in the box, said Mr. Cool, that is supposed to go in the hospital, but it hasn't yet.

If the audit shows that the money was spent incorrectly, said Mr. Hirsch, the county would have to pay for that item.

The group briefly discussed the emergency manager position, for which they are working on a job description so the county can hire someone to replace Mr. Cool. Commissioner Doyle Brown asked if it would be a full-time position to get

someone to help Mr. Cool do the job. Mr. Cool said he would continue in the position as emergency manager until someone is hired.

Mr. Cool said he needs someone to go to meetings and bring back the notes. The job is a full-time position, he said, but the county doesn't want to pay for that.

Part of that is a budget issue, said Mr. Hirsch.

What about the training for the National Incident Management System? Mr. Brown asked. The county was supposed to have all officials and managers trained by Oct. 1, 2004, Mr. Hirsch said. The training takes two to three hours, he added.

The training is for emergency preparedness and can be taken over the web or in a classroom setting.

Who all needs to be trained? asked Mr. Brown. Everyone who might be working during an emergency, said Mr. Hirsch. That includes the fire department, ambulance service, law enforcement, elected officials and public works.

The county is looking at 100 people, said Mr. Cool. What is it going to cost the county for the training? asked Commissioner Ralph Unger.

At that time, Mr. Hirsch asked for a 10-minute closed session for non-elected personnel. There was no action taken when it ended.

The county seems to have (See COUNTY on Page 8A)

First baby to get lots of presents

With the new year about here, *The Oberlin Herald* and area businesses are sponsoring the annual First Baby of the Year contest.

The family of the first little girl or boy born at Decatur County Hospital after Jan. 1, 2006, will win gifts from 14 businesses.

Gifts include a case of baby food from Raye's Grocery, a pizza for two from Pizza Hut, a \$20 gift certificate from Mary Kay, a gift from Fredrickson Insurance Agency, a

\$10 gift certificate from Ben Franklin, a gift from Ray Jewelry, a \$10 gift certificate from Ward Drug Store, a \$25 gift certificate from Rocking R, a \$25 savings bond from First National Bank, a \$10 gift certificate from Stanley Hardware, a \$25 gift certificate from Shear Creations West and Day Spa, a \$25 gift certificate from Adleman Drug Store, a \$10 gift certificate from The Dresser and a year's subscription to *The Oberlin Herald*.

Food drive hits goal with days to spare

The yearly food drive at Stanley Hardware has brought in more items this year than ever.

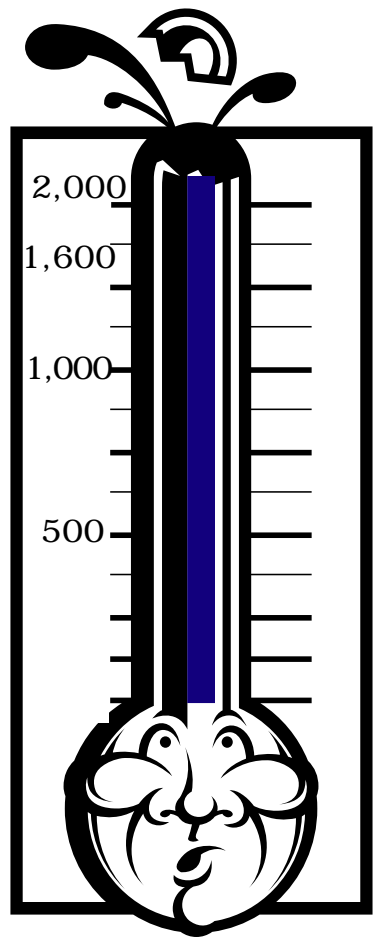
Owner Joe Stanley said this year's drive has been "better than ever." With a goal of 2,000 items, the seventh drive started just after Thanksgiving. A blizzard that weekend meant the drive got a slow start, but things picked up quickly as food and other items rolled into the downtown business.

As of Tuesday, there were 2,635 items in the store's window. Mr. Stanley said he was told a group in town plans to bring in a bunch of items, so the drive might top 3,000 items. That's a good thing with demand heavy and the supply low at the county's food bank.

"The news said that it was going to be a bad year for donations," said Mr. Stanley, "but Oberlin proved them wrong."

Mr. Stanley said the junior student council will help him deliver the goods to the Decatur County Food Pantry at the United Church. Last year the group weighed the food and there was nearly a ton and a half.

The plans are to move the food the middle of next week.



AT CENTENNIAL BOWL, Fireman Randy Peters (above) got ready to cool off the hot roof after a blaze destroyed the building. Gary Zodrow (below) pulled supplies

from the building across the street to Raye's Grocery during the blizzard in November.

— Herald staff photos by Steve Haynes and Kimberly Davis

County spends year looking at the future

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

In 2005, people in Decatur County started to look to the future: the future of schools, of water and sewer systems, bringing in new businesses and providing more.

At the same time, anniversaries were celebrated, user fees went up and things still were a lot like they were the year before.

At the end of each year, *The Oberlin Herald* staff takes a look back at what happened in the area. The year 2005 was busy for many.

In January, the City of Oberlin City made plans to redrill well No. 9 to help provide more water for the city. The idea was to pump 200 gallons more water a minute and have the project done by the summer.

In the same month, the city got a \$400,000 state and federal grant, the maximum amount, to help build a new waste water treatment plant. The council almost overlooked the notice at its regular meeting because it appeared to be ordinary mail from Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

The city's pool committee continued working on ways to plan and build a new pool. They talked with the Oberlin School Board to see if the schools would use an indoor pool if available.

February brought the annual Seeds of Hope Telethon, which celebrated its 10-year anniversary. The community access cable channel also celebrated 10 years of service.

The City Council asked the city attorney to negotiate a lease with Pheasants Forever to farm the

lake bottom at Sappa Park, after canceling a long-time lease with farmer Jim Abbey. The wildlife group later contracted with Mr. Abbey to farm the ground and plant wildlife plots.

The Kansas Legislature still had no final decision on school finance, leaving districts with no way to plan a budget for the next school year.

In March, Oberlin raised sewer rates 72 cents per 100 cubic feet of water used, from \$2.23 to \$2.95 to help pay for the new sewer plant.

The pool committee pushed forward with plans to help build a new pool or work on the existing one. At their request, the city hired a pool designer and engineering firm, Water's Edge Aquatics, to do some planning on the project.

In Jennings, the school board decided to ask districts in Oberlin, Norton and Hoxie to take their seventh through twelfth graders for the next year. The Oberlin School District accepted, as did Hoxie.

After months of research the county commissioners decided to put ideas for a possible assisted living center here on hold because no money to build a facility was available.

Four months into the year, temperatures dropped to 27 degrees. Many farmers worried that the wheat would be damaged.

In May, the Jennings School Board voted to disorganize at the end of the coming school year. Plans were formed to split the land among the Oberlin, Hoxie and Norton districts.

With the new well not done and water use high, the City Council lowered the trigger for declaring

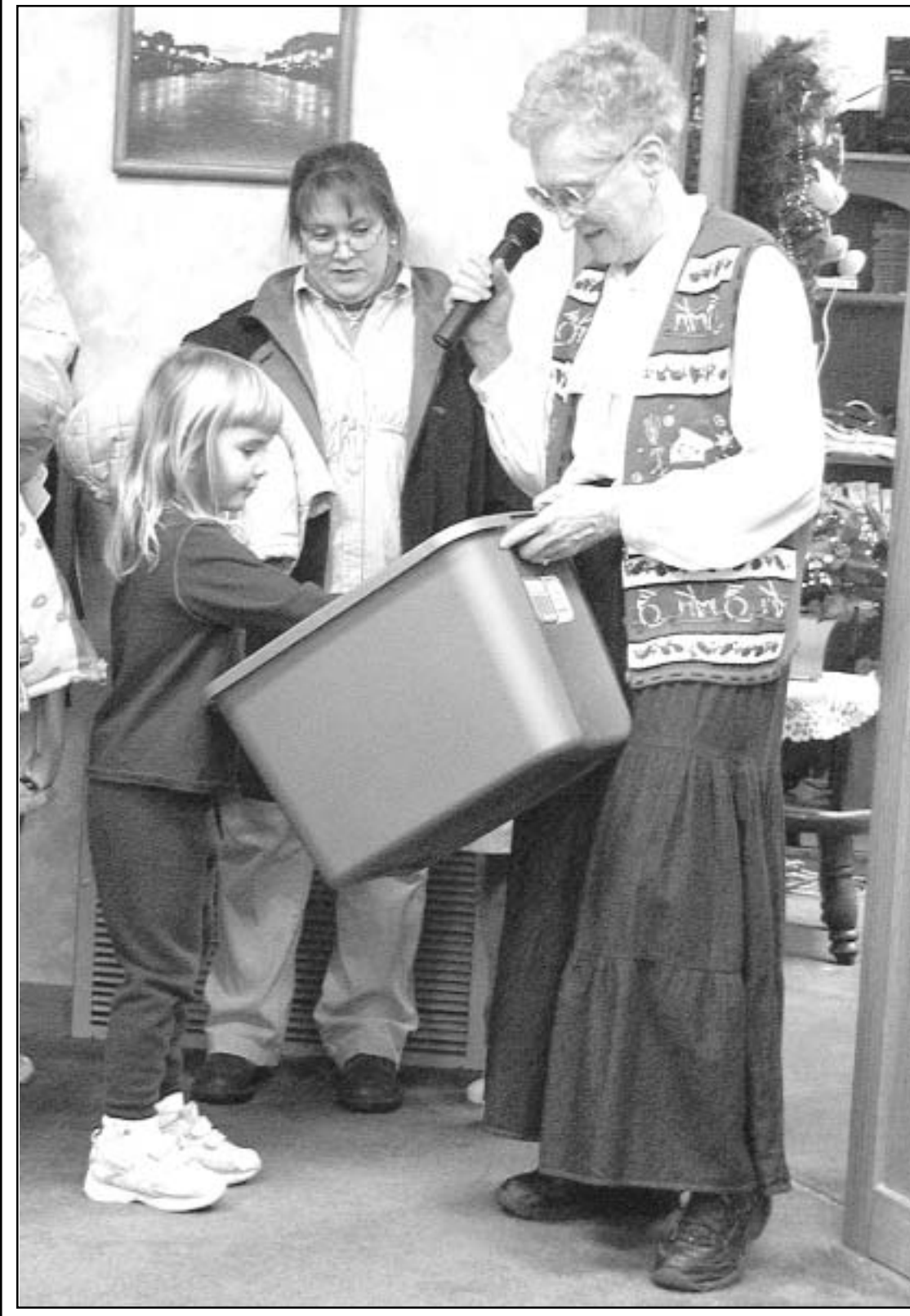


a water emergency by 100,000 gallons a day. If the city pumped 700,000 gallons a day, users would go on an even/odd system for out-

door watering. It was the fifth consecutive year for water restrictions.

(See FIRE on Page 8A)

Drawing for money



WITH A LITTLE HELP from Jean Soderlund, Chamber of Commerce manager Glenna Nichols announced the winners of the Oberlin Business Alliance drawing last Monday. Nine people won \$25 and Linda Weber won the big prize, \$1,000 in Santa Bucks.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

* Fire at bowling alley puts end to a tradition

(Continued from Page 1A)
The Decatur County Fair Board made plans for two new grandstand events including a roller demo derby and a tractor pull. The Oberlin Lions Club, in a huff over not being consulted about losing the traditional Saturday date, refused to sponsor the annual demolition derby.

In June, a fire that started around 3 a.m. destroyed the Centennial Bowling Alley and adjacent Red Crown Restaurant and Lounge. After hours of investigation, the state fire marshal declared the blaze arson. By year's end, despite many rumors, no one had been charged in the crime. Cash boxes had been dumped and evidence pointed to an accelerant being used to start the fire, officials said.

A week later, insurance experts looked at the building. The case is still under investigation, with a lawsuit filed over the insurance claim.

Sirens blew in the middle of the month as a tornado was spotted outside of Oberlin. There was no reported damage.

Wheat harvest kicked off with surprisingly good crop reports.

Halfway through the year in July, it seemed it wouldn't stop raining, meaning farmers had to delay harvest because it was just too wet to get into the fields.

Plans to build a lake and put in a wetlands at Sappa Park were presented to the City Council, but no

decisions were made.

The Kansas Legislature finally decided on school funding and the Oberlin District heard it would get \$146,000 more a year.

School started in August with reports that the Oberlin district should be about even with enrollment compared to the year before.

The city hired the Watershed Institute to work up plans for the wetlands and lake at Sappa Park.

As summer ended, work finally started to redrill well No. 9 to help give Oberlin more water to use.

In September, the Gulf Coast was hit by Hurricane Katrina. Here, the effects were felt at the gas tank as fuel prices hit highs around \$3 a gallon. Groups in the area started to raise money for relief.

The Oberlin School District reported enrollment up two students over last year while the Jennings School District has a total of just three, not counting the preschool.

Toward the end of the year, the county commissioners started to question a new law which says that each polling place must have an accessible voting machine, costing \$5,000 each, to help disabled voters.

Plans to close U.S. Farm Service Agency offices were stopped by opponents in Congress.

The county held the first all mail election to decide if alcohol should be sold on Sundays in Oberlin.

In early November, voters said

yes to selling alcohol on Sundays. The mail election had a large turnout, around 700 ballots of 1,049 sent out, turned in.

The city-county Economic Development Corp. got a loan to create a Business Enhancement Center in the old The Bank building in downtown Oberlin. The center houses the Chamber of Commerce, the corporation's marketing director, an office supply and computer business, 2BCreative, and a vintage clothing store called The Vault and has other store fronts open.

The beginning of December saw winter coming in like a lion when an unexpected blizzard hit the area. Snow and wind shut down the county as people in the country couldn't get to town and most businesses on Main Street stayed closed for a day.

The storm broke 900 power poles in the area and kept crews working around the clock to clean roads and get things going again.

Still working on the pool project, the pool committee met with an engineer from Water's Edge Aquatics to hear nine steps for planning a new pool.

With only three days left in the year, projects are still moving forward and the people of Decatur County are getting ready for a new year, with new plans and projects.

Happy New Year!

* County might get checked

(Continued from Page 1A)
dropped the ball somewhere on this training, said Mr. Brown. Everyone needs to be trained. The department heads will need to support it and get their people to the training.

Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy said he agrees, but doesn't know how to get all of his people to

the meeting. At a normal ambulance service meeting, he said, not all the volunteers are present. He said he has about five people who are trained.

If the county has a training class every month for a year, said Mr. Pomeroy, then everyone might get through the course.

Mr. Hirsch said that brings up another question. Is the county going to pay the workers to attend the training? There was no answer.

This will come down as a requirement, said Mr. Unger. It is important that the workers get this training for their safety and the safety of the whole team.

Businesses to close for holiday

Most Oberlin stores will be open regular hours on New Year's Eve, but plan to be closed on New Year's Day.

The Oberlin Herald will be closed on Monday and the paper will be printed a day late on Wednesday. Deadlines for The Country Advocate will be by noon on Friday and for The Herald at noon on Tuesday.

Mail will be delivered in town on Saturday and there will be regular hours for window service at the post office on New Year's Eve.

Federal, state, city and county offices and financial institutions

will be closed on Monday for New Year's Day. The courthouse will be closed all day Monday, and the county treasurer's office will close at noon on Friday.

Crossroads Express and Ampride will be open regular hours on New Year's weekend and Monday. D & M Sinclair will close at 10 p.m. on New Year's Eve, closed New Year's Day, then be open on Monday.

A&W Root Beer will close at 8 p.m. New Year's Eve, be closed New Year's Day and open Monday.

The Frontier Restaurant will be

open until 9 p.m. New Year's Eve, be closed New Year's Day and open on Monday. Keeno's Roadhouse will close on New Year's Day. The LandMark Inn's Teller Room will be open from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Saturday and also from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve for a "surf and turf" dinner. They will be closed New Year's Day and Monday.

The Oberlin Library will close at 1 p.m. on New Year's Eve and reopen Tuesday.

There will be a cattle sale at Oberlin Livestock Auction on Monday.

City employees get pay increase

The Oberlin City Council approved a pay raise of 35 cents an hour raise for all city employees but one at its meeting this month.

The one employee got an 84-cent-an-hour raise to bring him in line with the pay scale for the line-man apprenticeship class he will be taking.

Each year, the council gets evaluations on each employee and decides who will get raises. At the meeting Thursday, Dec. 15, the council discussed the evaluations behind closed doors in three 15-minute sessions.

After that, the council agreed to the 35-cent across-the-board increase.

The salary increase will mean about a 3 percent increase in the to-

tal payroll. The city's total payroll for 2005 will be around \$621,500.

The group discussed plans for rebuilding the waste water treatment plant. Mayor Ken Shobe said he was concerned because the project is behind the time table. Mr. Shike said that engineer Thaniel Monaco plans to get a letter to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment with a new schedule for the project.

The project has been delayed because of the soil testing that had to be done, said Mr. Shike. The city hasn't received the results from the test yet, he added.

The council approved beer license renewals for Ron Fowler for Crossroads Express, Mick and Rhonda Barth at the ReLoad, Decatur Co-op for Ampride and Kirk Brown at Raye's Grocery.

Council Roundup

At a meeting Thursday, Dec. 15, the Oberlin City Council:

- Approved a pay request for \$50,785 for work on the new well No. 12. Story on Page 2A.

- Approved pay raises of 35 cents an hour for all but one city employee. That person will receive an 84-cent-an-hour raise. Story at left.

Sheriff hires deputy to help in office

The Decatur County sheriff's office has a new face behind the desk.

Patti Skubal was hired and deputized, making her the only female officer, though she has never worked in law enforcement before.

Mrs. Skubal said she worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 20 years before moving to Oberlin. She just opened a vintage clothing store, the Vault, downtown, and runs an Internet sales business at www.naturallygirly.com.

Mrs. Skubal said she was hired to help update the office computer programs. She said she will go to law enforcement training in May. Since she has been deputized, she said, she can help escort female prisoners.

She said she only works part-time, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Tuesday and Wednesday.

So far, said Deputy Skubal, things are going well and the people have been great.



Patti Skubal

Kool Honda
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Red Spot Color
PDF in Gdn
oh/adv