

Entertaining sweethearts

*** Ranch lays off 42 employees as doors close**

(Continued from Page 1A) Medicaid Services and how they pay youth facilities, he said, and that could mean less money.

The closing of the ranch, said Mr. Deines, is purely Kelley's doing, not the state's. The department did have a few kids there, he said, but they didn't shut the ranch down. Primarily, said Mr. Deines, the ranch is a Juvenile Justice Authority facility, taking kids on court referral for a fee.

Peggy Pratt, director for north-west Kansas juvenile services, said she didn't find out about the closing until Thursday. At the time, she said, they had four kids at the ranch. Since then, she said, they have all been moved.

In order to get a youth in at the ranch, she said, they had to be eligible for Medicaid payment, which meant Medicaid paid for 60 percent with federal tax dollars and the state paid the other 40 percent. In order to qualify for this, the youth had to have severe behavior issues or mental health needs. All of those kids would have gone through screening with a case worker.

The case worker talks with the youth about drug and alcohol use, whether the person has been violent, whether the youth was able to be controlled by parents and other things.

At a "level 5" facility, she said, the boys can only be held for 90 days and then screened again and can possibly be held in the placement for another 50 days. After the 140 days, the state pays 100 percent if their bill.

Mrs. Pratt said the ranch here wasn't the only facility they work with. Juvenile Justice has kids in placements all over, he said.

Mr. Shike said Kelley has a three-year contract which was up for renewal on April 17. The contract re-

quires a 60-day notice of termination, he said.

The current contract calls for the company to pay the city \$3,600 a month to lease the facility and land. Mr. Shike said the \$3,600 a month is less than the city was receiving before the contract was renewed three years ago.

When the ranch opened seven years ago, said Mr. Shike, the city was paid by the kid. It was a more lucrative contact for everyone, he said. The last time the city negotiated with the company, though, they settled on the \$3,600.

Mr. Shike said the facility formerly was run by Cookson Hills, a church group out of Oklahoma. Idaho Christian Children's Ranch assumed the Cookson Hills assets and they shut it down. That is when Kelley approached the city with the idea of a youth ranch, he said.

The city borrowed money and redid the facility.

Mr. Shike said the city is still paying on the bonds because they were refinanced and combined with other indebtedness seven years ago. The city pays \$40,000 a year on those bonds.

The money the city gets from the lease, said Mr. Shike, is put in the budget as a line item and then goes into expenses at the ranch.

Mr. Shike said he doesn't think the city has a closed mind on any of the possibilities or options that could go in at the facility.

It will all be discussed. During the Oberlin City Council meeting Thursday night, Councilman Jay Anderson volunteered to work with a steering committee with the Economic Development Corp. to help find a new operator.

The council discussed doing an inventory on the equipment at the ranch and winterizing the buildings.

*** Teachers to work at schools in town**

(Continued from Page 1A) same money under their contracts.

Some of the focus for those teachers, he said, might be on at-risk students. The best answer, though, would be to find someone else to run the youth ranch.

"I will do everything I can," said Mr. Glodt, "to get a similar facility out there for the town and for the district."

There are still quite a few unknowns, said Mr. Glodt. There are questions to ask the state.

Not having the kids at the ranch will cost the district money, he said. This year the district received about

\$315,018 in state aid to educate the boys.

Mr. Glodt said he feels terrible for all of the staff in the district and everyone involved. The district just got another building at the ranch which was going to help improve the quality of education.

There is no way of knowing who might retire this year and who will fit into those teaching positions, he added, so it's hard to say how the staff will shake out.

"This is a bad situation," said Mr. Glodt, "but we have to make decisions that are educationally and fiscally sound."

Cops work school theft

Saturday morning, the Oberlin Police Department got a call that Decatur Community High School had been broken into overnight.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said the glass on a door at the southwest entrance was broken. So far, he said, they know that one laptop computer is missing.

There was also damage to swinging doors on the second floor and glass on a classroom door was broken. Thieves tried to break into a

vending machine in the school, the chief said.

Chief Lockhart said they don't know the extent of the damages yet.

Earlier in the year, the high school was broken into and someone took some computers.

Some of the items stolen the first time have been recovered, the chief said.

Chief Lockhart said as far as police know, the two burglaries aren't connected.



AT CEDAR LIVING CENTER, Myrna Jones accompanied Ron Temple's Gospel Singers at a recent Valentine's Day party, which was enjoyed by residents and guests. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

*** Pool committee to talk with county**

(Continued from Page 1A) don't live in either of those places and aren't with the hospital, but want to use the hydrotherapy pool? asked said Rob McFee. There would have to be a schedule of when it was open, said Gaylord Shields, with the committee.

Mr. Shields said he is a little appalled at the prices the pool engineer sent back. The bath house would cost half a million dollars. That much money builds quite a house, he said. It would seem that we could use some people from this area to do that building, he said.

Councilman Joe Stanley said he is all for an indoor pool, but that's a lot of money and he doesn't think the city can do it. The council came to a consensus that the indoor pool plan was out.

What about forming a recreational district with the schools? asked Councilman Jay Anderson. It would spread the tax burden. A recreational district can be formed between the school district and the city, he said.

Mayor Ken Shobe said maybe it should be approached as a county

pool, like they are doing in Rawlins County. Taxes could then be raised countywide.

If the city did look at a bond issue, said Dr. Anderson, would the committee be willing to work as hard on it? He said passing a bond issue could mean going door to door.

Teresa Shaughnessy, a committee member, said she thought they would if they knew something would come of it.

"Ten more years of soup supers....," she said, "some of us will retire."

"When I looked through the plan," said Councilman Patrick Pomeroy, "the prices seemed crazy."

Mrs. Shaw said she could call the engineer from Paddock Pools and see if the prices are in line.

What if the city rebuilds exactly what they have, said Mr. Stanley. There would need to be some changes to take care of the baby pool, said Mrs. Shaw. That will be addressed through zero-depth entry.

"How much money could be dedicated for a pool from the city?" asked Mr. Shields.

The council didn't answer.

The group talked about building a new outdoor pool in the same location as the old pool. Mr. Shike said the pool engineers said they can build during the off season, but theoretically we would lose a summer.

"Frankly, the biggest complaint I hear," said Mr. Shields, "is the pool house, not the pool."

The group discussed having the outdoor pool built by a pool contractor, but having a local construction firm build the pool house.

What is the main physical problem at the pool? asked Mr. Shields. Mr. Shike said to him it is the bath house. He said he talked with Willard Perrin of the water department, who advised him to bulldoze the bath house and start over, then patch the pool and get by for a while.

Mrs. Glodt said she didn't think the drains work properly. Water in the two smaller pools is drained every day and wasted and then those

two pools are refilled each morning from the main pool.

The group discussed the pool's safety and filtering system, which the city said were both fine.

If the city is going to keep the current pool for a few years, asked Mrs. Shaw, is the city going to set aside money to build a new one? Mayor Shobe said they can't guarantee what future councils will do.

The time is coming, said Mayor Shobe, where there will be a merging of city and county governments. He said he didn't think it would be in his lifetime. Or the pool's lifetime, added Mr. Shike.

Maybe this is the project to do countywide, said the mayor.

Councilman Ray Ward said he thought it would be better if the county got involved.

The council agreed that the pool committee should talk with the commissioners. Mrs. Shaw said she would call and get on the agenda.

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