



ON MONDAY, workers at Decatur Co-op loaded up a railroad car (above) with wheat while inspector Derrick Bolliger checked another. The co-op needed to load the 52-car train by today. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Wheat loaded on train

The crew at Decatur Co-op have been working around the clock to get 52 cars filled with wheat so it can be shipped out today.

The train showed up around 3 p.m. Sunday, which meant the men had to get to work. General Manager Karol Evans said they worked late Sunday night filling cars and all day Monday. By about 5 p.m., they had 30 cars filled and planned to stay late that night.

Although some of the cars are parked in town on the tracks near the elevator, around 20 were parked on the main line to the east.

Mr. Evans said they can snag about eight cars at a time and then they have to load them one at a time and park them back to the



This train, he said, has been on order since December and finally came. Mr. Evans said they don't hire extra people to help load the cars, but the fertilizer guys and workers from other departments help out.

State officials to talk

Decatur County's state representatives will be here to talk to voters the first Saturday in March.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and Rep. John Faber will be in the jury room at the courthouse from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 4.

The men will be here for an hour and a half. The meeting is open, and the legislators say they hope anyone with questions or comments about state government will turn out.

Council urges pool committee to talk to county about money

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Oberlin City Council suggested Thursday that the pool committee talk with Decatur County commissioners about helping pay for a new pool that would be supported by county tax dollars or a bond issue.

The group agreed that if the council raised taxes in the city, it would take a long time to come up with the \$2.5 million needed for a new outdoor pool.

One mill on the property tax, said City Administrator Gary Shike, will raise about \$7,000 a year in the city. If the city raised taxes 10 mills, he said, it would raise \$70,000 in a year. That way, it would take a little over 35 years to pay for a pool.

City Attorney Steve Hirsch said for the county, each mill brings in \$30,000 a year, so the bonds could be paid off a lot sooner if all taxpayers helped build the pool.

The city and committee received two pool designs, one for an outdoor pool with a price tag of \$2.5 million and one for an indoor and outdoor pool for \$5 million.

Maybe, said Anna Shaw, head of the committee, they can put in an outdoor pool and have a local contractor build a bath house for less than the estimates. Mrs. Shaw said the group wants to know what it should do. Does the council want the committee to go back to the people and ask them what they want. She said they don't want to do a

lot of work, have the people say yes to raising taxes to help pay for the pool and pick a plan and then have the council say no.

If the committee can get grants for an indoor pool, said Sue Glodt, another member, could the city do the upkeep.

The city needs to crunch the numbers on an indoor pool because of maintenance, Mrs. Glodt said. In the summer, said Mrs. Shaw, an indoor pool probably would be shut down except for the hydrotherapy part. When the hospital or retirement homes had someone using the hydrotherapy pool, they would have to provide someone to watch.

What about those people who (See POOL on Page 12A)

Company will close youth ranch

City receives letter quitting contract in April

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Officials of Clarence M. Kelley Detention and Youth Services told city officials Thursday they planned to close the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch east of Oberlin by the middle of April.

In fact, most if not all of the 24 youths at the ranch last week were to be gone by today. At least 10 left by Friday. More than 40 staff members faced unemployment, as might some teachers assigned to the ranch.

The company, based in Topeka, has run the ranch for the last seven years in buildings and land owned by the city of Oberlin.

Last week, City Administrator Gary Shike said that Terry Campbell, vice president and chief operations officer of for Kelley, delivered a letter stating that the firm would terminate its contact with the city on April 17.

Administrator Sue Glodt said the ranch has 42 staff members, which doesn't include the teachers employed by the Oberlin School District. She said they draw staff from the Oberlin, Norcat, Norton, McCook, Brewster and Danbury area. The ranch even has an employee from Oakley.

Some employees are talking

about filing for unemployment and some will try to stay on with Kelley at other locations.

The Topeka-based firm blamed troubles finding qualified staff and security problems for the closing.

"Over the past seven years, we have found it to be increasingly difficult to hire staff possessing the qualifications mandated by state regulations from the limited workforce within the Oberlin area," wrote Mr. Campbell. "We are also experiencing a different level of youth being placed within our resident treatment program, therefore requiring more security than that available in a ranch-type setting."

Mr. Campbell wrote that the ranch faced a possible loss of Medicaid money from the state after July 1.

Over the years, he wrote that the ranch has provided jobs with an annual payroll of over \$600,000.

Mike Deines, in the office of the secretary of Social and Rehabilitation Services in Topeka, said there are some changes coming that could mean a difference for the way facilities like the ranch are paid. There will be changes coming from the federal Centers for Medicare and (See RANCH on Page 12A)

Closing doors may mean fewer teachers

The Oberlin School District has until the beginning of May to notify teachers of layoffs under its reduction in force policy, a distinct possibility after the announced closing of the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch.

Thursday, Superintendent Kelly Glodt said the district received a letter from Terry Campbell, vice president of Clarence M. Kelley Detention and Youth Services, saying that the youth facility outside of Oberlin will be closing. The letter reads that the center, which houses boys under 18, will be closed by April 17.

Mr. Glodt said he isn't sure when all of the kids will be gone from the ranch, but when that happens, the

seven teachers who work there will be used at schools in town. There are four full-time teachers and three part-time people.

Mr. Glodt said after he found out that the ranch was going to close, he called the state Department of Education to find out about money for the rest of the year.

The teachers at the ranch are under contract until the end of the school year, he said. They will have jobs until the end of the year at least.

He said the district isn't sure yet what all of the teacher will be doing after the ranch closes. The teachers, said Mr. Glodt, will be earning the (See TEACHERS on Page 12A)

Early enrollment shows more kids in kindergarten

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Next year's kindergarten class at the Oberlin Elementary School already has 30 kids enrolled, 10 more than this year.

It's a good gain, but not enough to keep the school district from losing students — and budget — next year.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said preliminary enrollment at the grade school drew 15 boys and 15 girls for the next school year. Of those students, he said, 21 live in town and nine in the country, which means they will ride buses.

This year, said Mr. Glodt, there are 20 kindergartners, the smallest class the district has had in a long time.

Mr. Glodt said he doesn't know why there are 10 more for next year. Sometimes, he said, not all the kids are ready to move on to first grade from kindergarten. The numbers are only preliminary, he added.

In May, said Mr. Glodt, 44 seniors will graduate. If no other students move into the district or out, just

with the preliminary numbers, the district will lose 14 students. Because the district gets about \$4,257 per student from the state, he said, that could cost the schools more than \$100,000.

It would be wonderful to have the same amount of kids moving into the first grade as those who are graduating, he said. Everyone will have to keep a close eye on enrollment and on what the state will do with the school budget formula.

If enrollment does decline, said Mr. Glodt, he hopes the staff and students even out through attrition and the district isn't forced to have layoffs with its "reduction in force" policy.

Sometimes when a person retires, that person has to be replaced with a new teacher and sometimes not. "No matter what," said Mr. Glodt, "we will always try to fight for what is educationally best for our kids. The whole community needs to make sure we try to maintain and build student population."