

# County offers money

## New loan fund targets jobs here

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Decatur County entrepreneurs have another source of cash to help start up businesses as of last month, when the U.S. government provided a grant to encourage rural development.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said that the county received a grant for \$85,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development agency to provide loans to new businesses. The agency has raised a matching \$15,000, she said, making \$100,000 available for businesses.

After the Business Enhancement/Entrepreneurial Center opened in the old bank building at Penn Avenue and Commercial Street last year, Ms. Grafel said, Clare Gustin from Sunflower Electric Power Corp. suggested that the group seek a Rural Development loan.

Ms. Grafel said she contacted Brandon Prough with the agency in Hays, and after a year of work, had the proposal put together and submitted in February.

Decatur County was one of eight to get money from the grants, she said. The money is to be used to either create new jobs or retain old ones.

The application process to acquire a loan from the fund is long and complicated, she said, but the information would be needed by anyone who wants to start a successful business. Help is available for a small fee from the Small Business Development Center at Fort Hays State University, she said.

Some of the things needed by an applicant are a good, detailed business plan, a history of past performance and some money of your own.

"Everyone thinks you can just get money," she said. "It doesn't work that way. You have to put up some of your own money, too."

After an application is made, she said, it will be reviewed by the development group's board. Approval does not necessarily mean the government will approve the loan, she said, but usually they do.

At least one person is now working on an application, she said, and a couple of others have asked for information.

The development board has not set a limit on loan amounts, Ms. Grafel said, but they hope to be able to help three or four businesses.

This is not the first time that Decatur County has received government money to help small businesses. The county has been making loans from its revolving loan fund and has some money available there, too.

Among businesses helped by that program were E & S Meats, Gorman Tarps, Edgerton Automotive and 2B Creative in Oberlin and Red Apple Specialty in Jennings, she said.

"I think the revolving loan funds are one of the best things we've done," Ms. Grafel said. "We've had some micro loan money come back in, so it's still available."



**LOOKING THROUGH UNIFORM CHOICES**, Erica Fortin of Oberlin (foreground) got help finding her size from a representative of Life Uniforms during a break Thursday at The Gateway. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

## Nurses gather to talk about their business

Nurses from all over northwest Kansas met at The Gateway on Thursday to discuss their role in today's health-care field.

Twenty-four nurses from Oberlin, Ludell, Norcatour, Plainville, Jennings, Selden and Clayton heard Terri Johnson, past president of the Kansas State Nurses Association, talk in the morning about that group and how it can help nurses improve their image and professional standing.

In the afternoon, chief nursing officers from hospitals and nursing homes — Julie Campbell, Norton; Sherri Brown, Hill City; Margee Wilson, Cedar Living Center; Loretta McFee, Good Samaritan Center; and Suzanne Ahlberg, Decatur County Health Systems — held a panel discussion on

topics ranging from the nursing shortage to work loads and salaries.

Northwest Kansas is not represented at the state level of the nurses association, said Rosemary Stanley, staff coordinator for the Decatur Health Systems, and this meeting was an opportunity for them to meet and discuss common problems.

"It is important for nurses in northwest Kansas to feel like they have a voice in the issues that impact their careers," Ms. Stanley said. "This is why we wanted the nurses' association to travel to our part of the state."

Organizers say that this should be the first of several meetings for nurses to help them promote their profession and become involved in problems facing it.

"This was a great opportunity for me to meet area chief nursing officers," said Mrs. Ahlberg. "The course provided a valuable reminder of how important saying 'thank you' is to maintaining a positive work environment."

Besides the speaker and panel discussion, nurses were able to shop from two vendors set up outside the second-floor meeting room.

Life Uniform, Overland Park, had hundreds of uniforms, shoes and accessories available for purchase by nurses and health professionals.

Matt Ostmeyer, formerly of Oberlin, offered durable goods for home health, long-term care and hospitals by Sizewise Rentals of Ellis. His display equipment included a wheel chair, a four-wheel walker and a hospital bed with air mattress.



Terri Johnson

## Norcatour appeals decision closing polls

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

The Norcatour City clerk asked Decatur County commissioners last Tuesday to reconsider closing polling places in the county's small towns.

City Clerk Chris Dempewolf and the council had written commissioners a letter protesting their decision to close the outlying polls, and Jennings Mayor Bob Jones sent one of his own. Last week, Mrs. Dempewolf brought her city's plea to the commissioners in person.

With the primary election coming up Tuesday, however, the county's decision remained the same. There will be one polling place, at The Gateway in Oberlin.

The county bought two voting machines to comply with the new federal voting law. Each polling place is required to have one of the touch-screen machines to help voters who have trouble with paper ballots. Because of the expense, commissioners decided to go from five polling places — in Dresden, Jennings, Norcatour and two in Oberlin — to just one at The Gateway in Oberlin.

Both machines will be at The Gateway, with one used as primary and one as a backup, County Clerk Marilyn Horn said.

Commissioners have said that they decided to close the polling places in the smaller towns because of the expense of adding more voting machines.

Although the state paid for the first machine for each county, additional machines cost about \$4,500 each and upkeep and maintenance on them will be another \$3,000 a year, Mrs. Horn said. There is also the problem finding a place to store them, she said.

Because of the time required to use the machine to vote, most voters will end up using paper ballots anyway, Marilyn Horn said.

Mrs. Dempewolf told the commissioners that she had done some checking and has found that many surrounding counties had kept polling places open in smaller towns.

Norton County, she said, will have polls in Almena and Lenora as well as two in the city of Norton. The commissioners there bought machines for each location.

In Phillips County, she said, the commissioners decided to go to one location in Phillipsburg but kept the polling places open in the small towns, buying each third-class city a machine.

Graham County bought three machines and will have polling in Bogue, Morland and Hill City.

Smith County will have four polling places, she said, and the commissioners there also bought a scanner for counting.

In Rawlins County, the commissioners purchased four machines and will have polling in Atwood, Herndon and McDonald, she said. The fourth machine will be used as a backup, she said.

Down in Sheridan County, commissioners decided to have one polling place with two machines, the same as Decatur County. However, the county residents all received letters asking for feedback on losing their voting places and they are taking applications for advanced voting across the county.

Mrs. Dempewolf asked why the county didn't go to the small cities and talked to their councils or sent

letters to the citizens.

Mrs. Horn said that the county had been talking about the federal law for two years now and all the meetings have been reported.

Mrs. Dempewolf asked that the commissioners reconsider, since anything that takes people out of a small town hurts the community.

"We have businesses that benefit from elections — cafes, service stations and banks," she said.

Commissioner Doyle Brown said that he agreed with her but thought the commissioners had done what they thought best with limited county money.



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## Council to meet Thursday

The Oberlin City Council will meet at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the council will receive the second pay request from Midland Contracting of Kearney, Neb., for work being done at the new waste water treatment plant. He said this should be the second and the final pay request for the dirt work at the plant.

The council will also hold a hearing for the request to close an alley by Dave Schissler, who lives at 109 N. Martin.

Mr. Schissler petitioned for the closing at a meeting in July for the west half of the east-west alley behind his home on Martin Avenue. The alley is open now.

Mr. Shike said there is a sewer line in the alley, but no other utilities.

## Blistering days push water use up

With temperatures in three digits, Oberlin's water use jumped to nearly 1 million gallons last Wednesday, when the city pumped 951,300, despite water restrictions.

When they pumped 950,000, the system did keep up, said City Administrator Gary Shike, a series of high-use days might differ.

The trigger for water restrictions is 700,000 gallons in a day.

With the hot, dry winds — highs of 101 twice and 100 twice in the week — people used more water.

People on the city water system are still on restrictions. That means people with even addresses can water on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Those with odd addresses can water on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. No outdoor water use — filling pools, washing cars, watering lawns — is allowed on Mondays.

People can water between midnight and 9 a.m. or from 8 p.m. to midnight on their designated days.

The city pumped:

- 554,000 gallons on Monday,
- 826,500 gallons on Tuesday,
- 951,300 gallons last Wednesday,
- 622,300 gallons on Thursday,
- 848,000 gallons on Friday,
- 756,000 gallons on Saturday,
- 737,600 gallons on Sunday.

## Paper held to get votes

This week's Oberlin Herald was held a day to get results of the primary election for Decatur County commissioner in District 1.

The Republican nomination for commissioner was the only major local race in the primary. Printing was done Wednesday instead of Tuesday, and the paper should be delivered to homes on Thursday.

## Volunteers needed at park

Get out your work gloves, saws and lawnmowers and head out to Sappa Park at 8 a.m. Saturday to help with the scheduled work day.

Anyone interested in helping clean up the trails and public area in the park should meet at the shelter house. Pastor Heidi Wiebe, co-conveyor of the Sappa Park action team with Carolyn Burtis, said workers should bring a sack lunch.

From 5:30 to 7 p.m., the team will hold a barbecue fundraiser, said Ms. Wiebe, to help raise money for the park project. On the menu are burgers, chips, watermelon and beverages, all for a donation.

The same night, the young men who built the Frisbee golf course will hold an open house. Anyone who wants to learn how to play and where all of the holes are can stop by.