

## State agency shuts down youth ranch

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Sappa Valley Youth Ranch east of Oberlin shut down Friday, under pressure from the state Department of Health and Environment and local law-enforcement officers, with the last boys leaving that day.

Dick Kelsey, owner and president of King's Camp Inc., sent a letter to the Oberlin School District, the City of Oberlin and *The Oberlin Herald* on Thursday saying the facility would close.

Mr. Kelsey, who also runs a boys' facility in Goddard, reopened the ranch last April after Clarence M. Kelley Youth Services shut it down in March. Kelley had reopened the ranch after it was shut down by the Cookson Hills agency.

### Teachers will work in town

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Teachers at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch will take on jobs in town starting this week, since the facility where they taught closed on Friday.

The Oberlin School District has four full-time teachers, Aurelia Jackson, Deb Lohofener, Elaine Marcuson and Kimberly Witt, and two part-time instructors, Susan May and Keith Grafel, for the school at the ranch.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said all but the last employee to get hired at the ranch school will move in town. Ms. Lohofener is on a monthly contract,

he said, so she will only work through the end of October.

Mrs. May and Mrs. Marcuson will work at the high school, Mrs. Witt and Mrs. Jackson will be at the grade school and Mr. Grafel will do both.

The closing of the ranch, said Mr. Glodt, in no way has anything to do with the school there. The school was working efficiently and the students were learning.

Last year in March, Clarence M. Kelley Youth Services announced it would close the ranch. The (See **TEACHERS'** on Page 5A)

an acceptable working relationship with the program consultant of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment in that area of the state. This makes operating very difficult."

Denise Gooden, with the health department in Hays, said she couldn't talk about the license. Her boss, Lynda Sturgin with the agency's office in Topeka, did not return phone calls from *The Herald*.

The health department inspects the ranch regularly and issues licenses for youth facilities.

Mr. Kelsey said the ranch had only a temporary license, which was up at the end of the month. Last Tuesday, he said, he found out that the state wasn't going to renew that

license. That is how the department always works, he said; they give a temporary license first and then renew it.

Normally, if the license isn't going to be renewed, said Mr. Kelsey, the business is given a little more time.

Mr. Kelsey said last Monday he received some write-ups about the ranch from the health department, some of them citing problems back in May. Some of the write-ups, he said, were about things that weren't even valid.

Normally if there was a citation, he said, then the ranch would have five days to write an action plan to correct the problem and five days to (See **STATE** on Page 5A)

Mr. Kelsey's letter listed two main reasons for the closing: problems with its state license, and changes in the way the state classifies youth offenders.

"We have been unable to develop

## Former member of fair board asks county for help

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

A former member of the Decatur County Fair Board asked county commissioners last Tuesday to provide a mediator to help settle differences among the fair board, fair foundation and a group raising money for a new livestock barn.

Jim Wasson, who served on the fair board for five or six years, resigned in September in a letter to the board. At one time, he said, he staked his seat on the board on a promise that the livestock building would go up. Nothing happened with the building, he said, and he quit.

"So, here I am," said Mr. Wasson. Extension office secretary Donna Groneweg resigned at the end of August and board members Ron Montgomery and LaMoine Wolfram quit but didn't give a reason. Michael Wasson and Clay Anderson, both young farmers in their 20s, have been raising money to put in a new arena since the 2005 fair. Up until this week, the young men haven't had permission from the Decatur County Fair Foundation to buy a building.

Those involved need a third party to step in, he said, and help settle the dispute. A lot of people donated money for a new building, including quite a lot through memorials, and it needs to get built.

He said he understands some of the demands by the fair foundation, but this is a gift to the community and somewhere along the road, people have lost sight of that.

Mr. Wasson didn't elaborate on who said what and said he didn't want to get into it.

Mr. Wasson said he will take credit for a lot of the mistakes, but both sides have become bullheaded.

"Let's get the ball on the road again and get it rolling," he said. "We have money for the building, although we are having some trouble getting that amount from the fair foundation."

He said he knows the fair board and foundation are responsible for

### New building ordered

The Decatur County Fair Foundation board apparently has given the OK for a new arena building to be ordered for the fairgrounds.

Michael Wasson and Clay Anderson, young farmers who have been raising money for the new building, said Friday that Mr. Wasson got a call from a foundation member saying that they could order the metal building. He said they plan to buy on a "fall order special," which means the building can be ordered now and the shipment delayed until spring. That way, he said, they can get out to the fairground, tear out the old arena and do the dirt work this fall, then let the dirt settle over the winter. Mr. Wasson said they still need to get permission from the fair board and foundation to remove the old arena.

The building will cost around \$50,000, he said, and the fund drive is around \$3,000 to \$5,000 shy of being able to pay for the wiring.

They will be having another fund raiser at 5:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 13, to raise money for the wiring. Farm Credit Services of Northwest Kansas has donated three hogs for the roast and A&W Restaurant provided the condiments. The dinner will be served for a donation before the football game at Oberlin City Park.

the fairground. The plan is to hire (See **MAN** on Page 5A)

## Council questions electricity at museum

The Oberlin City Council almost changed the way the city supports the Decatur County Museum on Thursday, Sept. 21, by asking the county museum board to pay any utilities over \$3,500 a year, passing a motion, then rescinding it.

Councilman Jay Anderson asked the city administrator to figure out how much electricity the Last Indian Raid Museum uses each year. The city has not charged the museum since 1997, said Administrator Gary Shike.

Mr. Shike handed out a sheet at the meeting Thursday that showed the museum's power use since then.

The museum used 25,083 kilowatts in 1997, 20,852 in 1998, 20,615 in 1999, 25,140 in 2000, 27,619 in 2001, 29,900 in 2002, 25,940 in 2003, 24,743 in 2004 and 24,766 last year.

Councilman Joe Stanley said he was surprised the use wasn't any higher, noting that the 2005 number

is lower than 1997.

From these numbers, said Mayor Ken Shobe, the city can predict the amount of usage, but not the dollar amount because it will depend on what the city charges for electricity.

The council worked up how much it costs the city to give the electricity to the museum. Councilwoman Rhonda May said it is around \$2,800 to \$2,900 a year. It is important to look at this as a donation to the museum, she said.

If the electric bill is \$3,000 a year and their budget is, say \$20,000, that is a big deal, said Ms. May.

What if the city budgets the museum \$3,000 a year and then if they go over, they have to pay for the rest? That might be harder for the city to take care of, said Ms. May.

It shouldn't be, said Councilman Ray Ward, because the city can just send the museum a bill to keep track of the electrical use.

(See **COUNCIL** on Page 5A)



**HOMECOMING KING** Nolan May and Queen Heather Williams (above) rode with their attendants, Lindsey Eskew and Drew Juenemann, in the high school parade on Friday. The junior class float (below) won the competition

with a Donkey Kong theme. Heather Glodt (bottom) rode her red-and-white bike behind the volleyball team.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

## School pride shown

### Homecoming full of spirit

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Homecoming had its ups and downs this year, with the football team losing in overtime Friday night and the volleyball girls winning all four games on Saturday.

Decatur Community High School was full of spirit all week as students dressed up, built floats, held a bonfire, got pepped up at an assembly, had a parade, games and a dance.

Things were different this year, since the Lady Red Devils had a home tournament on Saturday. So the girls could get some rest, the dance was moved to Saturday night instead of Friday after the game.

Friday afternoon, each class had a chance to show off the floats they had made in downtown Oberlin. Around 2:15 p.m. parents, grandparents, alumni, store owners and others started to line Main Street. Kids from Oberlin Elementary School walked over to sit on the curb across from the Good Samaritan Center while across the street, the residents got ready for the annual parade.

There was a float from each of the classes. The senior class float had Super Mario, the junior class had palm trees, the sophomore class had Pacman and the fresh-



men had Madden Football 2010.

Queen Heather Williams and King Nolan May had just been crowned during the assembly, and they rode in the back of a convertible during the parade, as did the other candidates, Whitnee Ashley, Lauren Fortin, Sarah Murray, Emmie Pauls, Jobey Black, Kyle Glodt, Kurt Olson, Garrit Peters and Breck Simonsson.

At the game on Friday, window decorating and float winners were announced. The theme was video games. The juniors won the float competition with a Donkey Kong theme. The window competition was won by the junior class with the Donkey Kong theme with the seniors as second.

The senior window was Super Mario Brothers, the juniors used Donkey Kong, the sophomores used Pacman and the freshmen, Madden Football 2010.

