

Drug center may replace youth ranch

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

The Oberlin City Council discussed an option for opening a teen alcohol and drug treatment facility at the former Sappa Valley Youth Ranch at its meeting Thursday night.

Mayor Ken Shobe said the former operator, King's Achievement Camp, had moved all of the boys out at the end of September. All the employees were let go.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he got a call saying that King's Camp would have everything cleaned up and the build-

ings fixed by Saturday.

Although the ranch doesn't have any boys, the actual closing day is two months from the final day on September 26, because the facility had to give two months notice. That means the facility won't actually go back to the city until November.

Councilman Jay Anderson said the city should check on the repairs. If the company doesn't do the repairs, he asked, will there be any repercussions?

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said he drove around the ranch one day and peaked

into house No. 1 and all of the trash had been cleaned up.

King's Camp, said City Clerk Deanna Castle, is current on rent and utilities. The firm will owe one more month of rent for November, she said.

Mayor Shobe said he heard rumors of an alcohol and drug treatment center opening up at the facility, operated by the same company that runs the 180 house on North Elk. That firm, King's Alcohol/Drug Treatment Center is related to King's Camp.

Cathy Rieken, assistant director of treat-

ment services, said the house near The Gateway is an independent living facility.

Is your organization interested in the ranch? asked Mayor Shobe.

She said she had talked with Heath Bechler, president of King's Alcohol/Drug Treatment Center, about renting the ranch and opening an "interdependent house." She said they have lots of questions, including how much rent would be and if they could paint the buildings so the teens would feel it was more like home. She said they also want to know for sure what happened

at the ranch.

"We don't know what happened," said Mayor Shobe. "The paper said the Kansas Department of Health and Environment shut it down for violations."

Ms. Rieken said what she heard was the violations were from back in May. For our operations, she said, we have a different training for staff.

Do you have control on who you accept into the facility? said Mayor Shobe. Yes, she said, these kids are ones who have used al- (See CITY on Page 5A)



ONSUNDAY, Cheryl Votпка (above) worked on a quilt at the Mini Sappa Antique Engine and Thresher Show at the county fairground. Dave Green (below) leaned on an

engine while he talked with one of the other men at the show.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Show displays antiques

Trophies were given, kids played and some learned how farmers used to bale hay, cut wood and do things on the farm before modern equipment during the annual Mini Sappa Antique Engine and Thresher Show this weekend.

The show started on Saturday at the Decatur County Fairground, and though windy, the weather was warm and there were plenty of people milling around. One vendor said they only made \$6 less on Saturday than they did on the first day a year ago, so she thought the numbers were about the same.

Sunday was a different story, as the weather changed and some of the exhibitors went home early. Just after lunch time, the same vendor said she had heard that the show would be canceled for the afternoon.

Even so, the event drew 59 tractors, 25 engines, 11 mowers, 33 cars, nine cycles and scooters, five pieces of equipment or implements and one team of horses, a total of 143 exhibits.

Winning trophies on Saturday for their exhibits were Doug



Hagans, Gus Wolters, Everett Shuler, George Brown, Gleason Dryden, Gary Orr, Bill and Peggy Anderson, Jim Plotts, John Gallentine and Eugene Anderson. On Sunday, winners included Gary Allen, Jim Marshall, Rich Shaw, Bill and Sam Steinmetz, Melvin Smalberger and Mr. Shuler.

Brandon and Matt Vacura, Norton, and Cody Wright, Gem, won prizes during the kids pedal tractor pull Sunday.

Winners of the poker run on Saturday were Wayne Goltl, first, and John Bremer, second.

Besides tractors, vehicles and equipment, 65 quilts were on display, 20 wall hangings and a few

other items. The people chose Reva Marshall's king-size double wedding ring quilt as their favorite and an embroidered baby quilt made by Ann Martin and owned by Anikka Martin as their second favorite.

The antique club plans the next show for Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 6 and 7, next year.

Natural gas customers will pay more

Oberlin customers of Midwest Energy may see a \$5 increase for delivery charges in their gas bills starting in October, depending on how much gas they use at their homes.

"Most residential bills will go up \$5.15 per month on average," said Bob Helm, Midwest spokesman in Hays. "The increase is only the second since 1995, and the first change in gas delivery rates since early 2003."

The delivery charge for Midwest Energy varies depending on how much gas is used, he said, and may be more or less than \$5 a month.

Earnie Lehman, president and general manager of the co-operative, cited several reasons for the increase, including replacement of aging pipelines, increasing material costs and declining gas sales, which mean remaining customers have to bear more of the costs of replacement.

"The good news," Mr. Lehman said, "is that our customer-owners are continuing to improve the efficiency of the space and water heating systems in their homes. The bad news is that some farmers have reduced their use of gas for irrigation

in response to wholesale gas-cost increases."

Regardless of how much gas is flowing through the pipes, Mr. Helms said, Midwest has to continue maintenance and replacement to maintain safety standards.

The increase was approved in mid-September by the Kansas Corporation Commission, he said.

"The cost of plastics, associated with pipe, have gone up 58 percent and steel pipe is up 80 percent," Mr. Helm said.

Mr. Lehman said Midwest's request affects only the delivery part of bills. The cost of gas has been driving bills up much faster, since those increases are passed along to customers dollar for dollar.

"Three-fourths of the total gas bill is in wholesale gas, which in the last few years has gone up 400 to 500 percent," he said.

A customer-owned co-op, Midwest Energy serves about 42,000 gas customers in 34 counties. It bought the gas system in Oberlin from KN Energy in 1998.

The firm serves 46,000 electric customers, whose rates are not affected by this increase, Mr. Helm said.

Congressman tours long-term care unit and local hospital

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Congressman Jerry Moran stopped by the Decatur County Hospital on Monday for a quick tour, his first since 2001.

Rep. Moran said he had a meeting in Colby that morning and thought he would stop here before he headed back home. As a member of Congress, he said, he spends a lot of time on health care issues.

Administrator Lynn Doeden said the hospital is looking at some changes, with the idea of adding on to the east side of the building. She said they have land to the east or where the emergency room door is, and they can build to the sidewalk. That would give more room for specialty clinics, home health care, bioterrorism storage and other things.

Mrs. Doeden said they are trying to decide whether to borrow money or use money that families have bequeathed to the hospital.

Rep. Moran asked if the hospital is county owned. Mrs. Doeden said it is, explaining that the hospital board is appointed by the county and then a corporation, Decatur Health Systems, leases the facility from the board. The county levies a property tax to help support the hospital, she noted.

Is this hospital associated with other facilities? asked Rep. Moran. No, said Mrs. Doeden.

Another new item since Rep. Moran's last visit, she said, is an education room in the basement. It has two couches, three computers and provides a place where staff members can further their education.

Mrs. Doeden said the hospital received a gift from a local family, and she called and asked permission to use the money for this room. It opened this week, she said.

What about Internet service, the congressman asked, is it good? Mrs. Doeden said the hospital has wireless service upstairs and uses the telephone company's service downstairs. She said the hospital has the wireless service so that nurses can use portable computers to check patients at bedside.

In order to put in a new computer system, she said, the hospital had to borrow money from the board and then the corporation pays it back monthly. Mrs. Doeden said the hospital put the system in phases, which has also helped with the cost.

There is a lot of demand for medical records to be done electronically, said Rep. Moran, but most hospitals aren't able to because of the cost. Are the doctors using the electronic system? he asked. Mrs. Doeden said one of the physicians uses it all the time but the other two don't use it as much. She said she thought about getting the computers for the doctors at the clinic, thinking that might help them use the electronic system. Mrs. Doeden took Rep. Moran on a tour of the facility from the front to the main hallway with patient rooms, to Cedar Living Center, the nursing home wing, and back around.

She said the long-term care facility is now full. The hospital also runs an independent living facility called Wheat Ridge Terrace.

The last stop was the medical records office. Mrs. Doeden said the hospital doesn't have room for all of the records. They are looking at a system where the records are scanned in and will then be stored on a server.

Rep. Moran spent around 45 minutes at the hospital. He said in his 69-county district, he represents 75 hospitals, which is one of the reasons he is interested in health care.

Council puts cap on museum utilities

The Oberlin City Council, reversing itself again, agreed Thursday to donate up to \$3,500 a year in utilities for the Last Indian Raid Museum.

At a meeting on Thursday, Sept. 21, the council discussed allocating \$3,500 to the museum, but decided to hold off until Mayor Ken Shobe

talked to museum board members.

Mayor Shobe said he talked with board member Dana Marintzer after the last meeting and told her for accounting purposes the city possibly wanted to make the allocation of \$3,500 a year for museum utilities.

Part of this process, he said, would include starting to read the meters at

the museum.

Councilman Jay Anderson made a motion to make the \$3,500 allocation, and Councilman Ray Ward seconded it. Everyone except Councilman Rob McFee voted in favor of the allocation.

The council heard that work is moving along on the new waste

water treatment plant south of town. David Blau with Miller and Associates told the council a report from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment shows that the project is 56 percent complete.

He said inspectors did find some asbestos in one of the concrete structures that would have to be removed.