

Plans should prepare us for disaster that will come

The Greensburg tornado may have been a wake-up call for many Kansas communities, prompting action on emergency plans that federal and state law, hurricanes, snowstorms and even "free" federal money haven't accomplished.

About time, huh?

Decatur County commissioners actually started the ball rolling before the twister leveled Greensburg, asking the whereabouts of the county's emergency plan.

The latest version, it turned out, existed only on the computer used by one sheriff's deputy, who was supposed to be revising it. Commissioners asked her to get them a copy.

There was some debate about whether the county should have a disaster exercise or just file the plan. That should be a no-brainer, as they say. Of course we need an exercise!

How else will people know what they are supposed to do? You can read a plan, but only when you set out to do the tasks involved will most people learn how difficult they really are.

Most of us learn by making mistakes, and during an exercise, at least no one will die from them, designated casualties aside.

Last week, the Oberlin City Council got into the act, going over its emergency plan with city managers and crew. That was a good first step, but the city ought to be part of any disaster exercise.

In fact, the city and county really should have a joint plan, tied together so when a tornado or other disaster does strike, everyone will be on the same page. Officials in all outlying towns ought to be involved as well.

It's not likely that a major event will strike solely within city limits. And in a real disaster, even Oberlin will need the county's help. The smaller towns depend on the county for emergency services, so county officials will be involved if anything happens in one.

Many things must be planned: who's in charge, where will coordinators work, who

does what, where do you call for help. Everyone from the police to the electric crew to the street department, plus firemen, cops and deputies, will need to know where to gather and what to do. Citizens need to know, too.

Planning needs to cover the obvious, such as how to handle the injured and how to secure the area, to the not-so-obvious. Someone will have to issue curfew and damaged-area passes, checking credentials and identification.

Outside rescuers, state and national reporters, television crews, helpers and volunteers all will need some kind of pass. People who live in the damage zone will need passes to get back to their property. One Kansas city used blank printed utility bills, difficult to forge and unique, to make up passes.

Most importantly, everyone will need to know who is in charge. In an emergency, there'll be no time to decide if the sheriff or police chief gives the orders to law enforcement, or whether county commissioners or the mayor take overall command.

All of that mitigates for a unified county plan agreed to by everyone. Then comes the really hard part:

The plan needs to be publicized and distributed to everyone who has a stake in it, and that is pretty much all of us. Federal law not only requires states and counties to have emergency plans, it requires them to be open for public inspection, and with good reason.

If a plan requires evacuation or blocking off a damaged area, or any one of a million other things, we all need to know. The whole county deserves to know how the plan reads, how it will work and how it proves out in an exercise, because it's our lives, our property and our towns that will be at stake.

A good start has been made by the city and the county, but a lot more needs to be done, and quickly, because tornado season is upon us. — *Steve Haynes*



Staff questions school choice

To the Editor:

The following was to be sent to the Oberlin School Board:

We are writing this on behalf of Duane Dorshorst, our principal and mentor for the past 14 years, and to voice our disappointment in the unprofessional treatment he has received, once again, from your actions.

Your decision not to grant Mr. Dorshorst an interview for the superintendent position has left many of us confused and wondering what else is in store for our district. It is even more puzzling to us when you went to him, asking him to apply.

Our district has been through many ups and downs in the past several years. We have struggled through a budget crisis, new administration at both the high school and district office, and staffing problems from lower district enrollment and the closing of the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. The one consistent voice through all of these situations has been Mr. Dorshorst.

When (High School Principal Charles) Haag and (Superintendent Kelly) Glott first came into the district, he helped them immensely to make it as smooth of a transition as possible. This shows great character in Mr. Dorshorst, as he was overlooked for an interview for the superintendent position the first time. Instead of letting his disappointment

Letters to the Editor

affect his job, he embraced the opportunity to shine as a leader.

Mr. Dorshorst has poured his heart and soul into this school district and community for the past 24 years. For 10 years, he touched the lives of hundreds of high school students as a teacher and coach. His dedication and enthusiasm for his job have inspired many of our students to become what they are now.

Now that he has moved on to the grade school, he has had an even larger impact. He works constantly to better us as teachers and individuals, but that is minor compared to the effect he has on the students.

When you see Mr. Dorshorst interacting with the students, you can see the love he has for his career. The students at the elementary school look up to Mr. Dorshorst as a source of moral support.

Not every decision he makes is the most popular one, but you know that they are always made with the children in mind first whenever possible.

Mr. Dorshorst is also a key figure in the education world throughout the state of Kansas. He is active in many teams and committees, and is currently president of the Kansas

State Principal's Association. He sees the importance of making sure rural schools in Kansas have a voice that is heard.

Mr. Dorshorst's experience and credentials speak for themselves. Why he was not granted an interview may never be understood by those of us outside your closed doors. It makes no sense to overlook a highly qualified individual who is obviously committed to this district and community.

We just hope this latest blow does not change that commitment. The only bright side in all of this is that we will not lose Mr. Dorshorst and his leadership at Oberlin Elementary School.

Faculty and staff at Oberlin Elementary School

(signed) Cheryl Soderlund, Kelly Shields, Jim Buchholz, Judy Elwood, Jeni Henningson, Mardi Lohofener, Randy Walters, Diana L. Steinmetz, Deena Zdrov, Steve Cullen, Jackie Anderson, Carla Depperschmidt, Roma J. Grafel, Cin Sattler, Kristi Smith, Vicki Leitner, Kathy Tacha, Keith H. Grafel, Jo Mason, Loretta J. Sullivan, Carol Wasson, Christie Morris, Sherri Ruf, Lisa Fortin

Early sales give her free time

Our little town had its annual citywide garage sale Saturday. At least 23 families signed up to sell things they no longer needed or wanted, and it's true, "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

I've never seen such traffic. Shoppers buzzing from one house to another. And I was right in there with them.

We sold out immediately, so I had plenty of time to cruise town and look for bargains. I found the perfect lampshade for a unique lamp one of my daughters gave me, the cutest little shabby-chic three-drawer dresser and two plastic platforms to put in my kitchen cabinet to stack spices on.

How did we sell out so quickly? Because I only had three items: an entertainment center and two light fixtures. Our new neighbor across the street and south took all three, so we were done.

Besides, every time I mention "garage sale" Jim says, "Carolyn, I'll write you a check for \$26.52 and I won't have to carry it all out, you won't have to waste a day sitting there, and I won't have to carry it all back in at the end of the day."

Smart guy.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansas.com

-ob-

With a recent cleanup project almost done, Jim got the urge to plant a garden. We've never had any luck growing tomatoes where we've had them, so it was time to try new "digs." He tilled up a nice little patch, then amended the soil with some sand, and I added the finishing touch.

I can't believe I'm admitting to this, but I actually agreed to pick up cow chips to fertilize the garden. Anything to help the cause.

Last summer, we "pastured" our two calves on our empty lots. Jim ran electric fence and every so often we had a roundup and moved them to greener fields. Of course, they left their deposits, and Saturday night I was out there with a bucket, picking up chips.

I kept telling myself, "Think of the tomatoes. Think of the tomatoes." My grandmother used to burn buffalo chips in her stove, so I guess I can pick up a few chips if it means better tomatoes, zucchini and flowers.

-ob-

Sunday was Mother's Day. Here's how ingrained mothers are in our lives:

"A high school science teacher spent an entire class period on the basics of magnets.

"The next day he gave a pop quiz. The test began, "My name begins with the letter M. It contains six letters and picks up things. What am I?"

"More than half the class answered, Mother."

Woman defends right to write book

To the Editor:

Please tell me what exactly is going on in this small town? It seems some people think they should have the rights to my book.

I spent 10 years, off and on, then quit my investigating on the death of my daughter, only to find 10 more, and even today I am still doing some research.

It is really sad and annoying to think someone would want to take my material to do a movie.

Some of us go to church, as we know it is for our good. We hope to grow in the knowledge and understanding of God's holy word through the grace of our Lord.

I would have hoped there would

have been some compassion and understanding in the ones trying to do the movie.

Did you lose your child through death? Do you have any idea what it is to have your child taken away from you? With an unattended death and various professionals not doing what needed to be done?

The reason I am writing this book is not only for my closure but to be able to help other parents in a similar situation. I found no one who offered to be of help in this endeavor.

But I have had much of my manuscript, along with various photos, removed from my home.

Do you suppose that is why the literary agent from New York ad-

vised me at my meeting with her last October in Wichita, "Elsie, maybe you do not need to write a book." Then she advised that I get the address from the movie on Princess Diaries. I would like to know the motive of the ones doing a movie?

Elsie Wolters, Oberlin

From the Bible

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

Proverbs 4: 1, 2

Week includes a lot of ball, parks

Take me out to the ball game.
Take me out with the crowd.
Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack.
I don't care if I never go back.

Steve and I just got back from most of two weeks in Georgia, and that included three baseball games.

We watched the Atlanta Braves beat up on the Los Angeles Dodgers on a Friday night and Sunday afternoon, and the Augusta Greenjackets get their tails kicked by the visiting Columbus (Ga.) Catfish on Wednesday.

Over the past couple of years, we've made it a point when we travel to major-league cities to see if their baseball team is in town. If they are, we try to go to a game.

So we've watched the Brewers beat the Braves in Milwaukee, the Nationals overcome the New York Mets in Washington and the Rockies get trounced in Denver by just about everyone. (Hey, our American League team is the Royals, and they were 12-25 after Sunday's game.)

Going to the Braves games was great fun. We got to watch good baseball with friends from Texas on Friday, and we enjoyed another round with our daughters and their guys on Sunday. We had planned to go on Saturday with the children but couldn't get tickets since it was Cinco de Mayo. Since the visitors whopped the home team, 4-0, on Saturday, that turned out to be a good deal.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
cahaynes@nwkansas.com

We never did like the Dodgers.

We ended up at the Georgia Aquarium on Saturday and enjoyed a fishy good time despite the fact that everyone else in Atlanta — at least those who weren't at the baseball game — decided to visit the aquarium and bring their 1.4 children each.

After Atlanta, where we got to yell for the home team and do the "Tomahawk Chop" whenever there was a player in scoring position, we moved on to Augusta, two hours and a couple of million people to the east.

Wednesday, May 9, was oldest daughter's 33rd birthday and her sister had planned for us and a few friends to go out to the ballpark for the Greenjackets game.

The idea got picked up by a co-worker and snowballed to more than 30 people, so the crew rented a party area where for \$18 a ticket you got to watch the game from right behind the bullpen; eat a buffet of hamburgers, hot dogs, cole slaw, potato salad, watermelon and pop; and wear a nifty free team cap. We got a visit from Auggie, the Greenjackets' mascot, who looks like a wasp who just won the Masters golf tournament.

We had a lot of fun chowing down and talking and didn't spend much time watching the game. And, since the Catfish swarmed all over the Greenjackets, 4-0, that was just as well.

We did get several foul balls tossed to us from the bullpen. Miscellaneous little boys got most of them, but both daughters and Steve took home official South Atlantic League baseballs.

I love the names of these minor league, class A teams. Besides the Greenjackets and Catfish, they include the Asheville (N.C.) Tourists; Charleston (S.C.) RiverDogs; Salisbury (Md.) Delmarva Shorebirds; Greensboro (N.C.) Grasshoppers; Hickory (N.C.) Crawdads; Kannapolis (N.C.) Intimidators; Lakewood (N.J.) BlueClaws; and, best for last, the Savannah (Ga.) Sand Gnats.

Our next baseball foray will be to Denver to watch the Rockies take on the Royals. Seeing the Greenjackets in action should have been good practice for that.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

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170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800

E-mail: oberlinherald@nwkansas.com

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STAFF

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Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
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