

Council works to improve community

By Pat Schiefen

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The Sherman County Economic Development Council has spent a busy year not only promoting Goodland and the county, but working on ways to improve the appearance as well as the health of the community and its businesses.

The office offered four grants of \$1,500 each, two to businesses and two to home owners for improvement on their properties. Goodland Grind and Gallery will receive a business grant to add on a patio and Pioneer Health will add an awning to the front of its business.

Lola Wiley, 1501 Center, got a grant to paint and shingle her house and LeAnn Haarberg, 307 Harrison, got one to replace rotting soffit and fascia. Director Tiffani McMinn said the homeowners are matching the \$1,500 grants with a total of \$8,860.

She said the council got over 100 applications for the grants, and the selection committee had quite a time narrowing down to the top projects.

The office, run by McMinn and office manager Helen Dobbs, has created a virtual Workforce Center where people can come and fill out applications for jobs that businesses need to fill. Computers link job seekers to state data banks.

McMinn was a leader in the Shine On Sherman County strategic planning program, which set community goals. A beginning "community conversation" gathered concerns and selected people to be on action teams working

on government services alliances, youth development, community beautification, resource development and regional health care.

The youth development team picked as its first project a skate park in Steever Park. The team, which includes two teenagers, felt a skate park would serve kids who tend to get left by the way-side.

The teens have had a car wash to start raising money for the park. The city has given them a location near the water park. The first step is to raise \$15,000 for a basic cement slab. McMinn is writing grant applications for \$100,000 to finish the park.

The community beautification team wants to raise \$10,000 to match project development money from Economic Development to fix up Main Avenue. The agency will look for grants to raise \$40,000 to \$50,000 to help with the job. The team has not come up with a specific project yet.

The resource development team is helping to market and promote the Sherman County Community Foundation. They have arranged for a banner for the foundation and have helped man booths at trade shows and fairs, including the annual Home and Garden Show.

The health care team reported the effort was worthwhile even though the Goodland Regional Medical Center did not get the contract for an outreach clinic for the Department of Veteran's Affairs. The government services alliance wants

to help elected officials explore consolidation of city and county government services.

The development office is working on a Community Development Block Grant of \$400,000 to help people in low to moderate income categories fix up their homes.

Mrs. Dobbs said that the first thing they did was to take a comprehensive tour of Goodland and really look at housing. She said she was surprised to find out how many homes needed new roofs, adding that she is preparing a map large enough for notations to be made on it.

The office also has been looking at different ways to raise \$3.6 million for a new county museum.

The office made two new micro loans to startup businesses and secured \$38,000 for an existing business for expansion. The information on existing micro loans has been updated and repayment of past loans is back on schedule, Mrs. Dobbs said.

Information for the Goodland Industrial Park has been updated and it is now listed as free land for anyone willing to build a plant or business.

To get the information out, the office has finished a new website at www.gogoodlands.com, plus a video disk and brochure, and with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, an updated Guide to Sherman County.

The office provided information to 47 prospective businesses over the past year, Mrs. Dobbs said. Thirteen existing business were

Sherman County

• **Money spent** for economic development in Sherman County in 2006: \$74,270.

• **Population** today 5,981, in 2000 6,760, in 1990 6,926, in 1980 7,759.

• **People working** today 3,385, in 2000 3,525, in 1990 3,458, in 1985, 3,656 (Kansas Department of Labor).

• **Economic Development Director:** Tiffani McMinn, one year on the job.

• **EDC office** at 104 E. 10th, Goodland. Phone (785) 890-3473

• **Median family income** in 2000, \$38,824.

offered incentives, with some of them being passed on to the Kansas Department of Commerce.



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