



Happy New Year!

...from all of us here at *The Herald*.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

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Storm skips county

Covering here not as expected

Northwest Kansas had a white Christmas in the bag even before it started to snow on Christmas day.

And that's rare enough, since the odds of having significant snow on the ground here for Christmas are only 10 to 25 percent, according to forecast records.

With December snow on the ground and some streets still covered on Christmas Eve, weather forecasters were predicting more of the white stuff. However, no snow fell until late in the afternoon on Christmas Day and then Oberlin only measured about an inch, the National Weather Service in Goodland reported.

That was enough to send Decatur County residents out with shovels and brooms to clean walks, drives and vehicles, however.

Then another big storm was forecast for Thursday, but people waited all day for it to arrive. On Friday morning, the ground was again white but again the expected big dump did not materialize. Decatur County Sheriff Ken Badsy said that the snow fell between midnight at 2 a.m. on Friday.

Jeremy Martin, a meteorologist at the Goodland weather station, said that the storm dumped 8 to 10 inches on eastern Colorado, than moved more quickly than expected over western Kansas.



SHOVELING OUT his mother-in-law's driveway on Cass Avenue on Friday, Ken Shobe was bundled up for the cold weather. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

The storm also moved farther south than expected, he said, with Goodland getting only about three inches and Oberlin less.

The official observer in Oberlin came up with less than an inch from the storm, however a lot of people thought that they scooped

more than that off their walks. Mr. Martin said that no major storms are expected in western Kansas for the next week or so.

Shopping pleases merchants

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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The Christmas shopping season was described as good—but not great—for most Oberlin merchants.

Downtown pharmacies, hardware dealers and the women's clothing store reported that they were happy with their Christmas sales, but said things could have been better.

"It was good, but not great," said Joe Stanley, owner of Stanley Hardware. "I was happy with our sales."

While his Christmas decorations went well, he said, the light sets did not. Mostly, he figured, that was because cold weather kept people from doing a lot of outdoor decorating.

Mr. Stanley said that he sold a lot of power tools this year and did well with a new line of small appliances that included toaster ovens, coffee makers, mixers and toasters. Also, he said he sold a lot of snow blowers.

Across the street at Home Planning Center, Dana Marintzer said that tool sets and visor lights for baseball caps sold well during Christmas season.

She said the store didn't sell a lot of the craft items it carries, some but not a lot.

"People seem to be buying more useful than decorative items," she said.

Pharmacist Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, said that while the season wasn't a record

breaker, it was better than the last couple.

Diffusers, decorative vases filled with scent, were one of the store's best selling gift items, he said. Wicks, which look like small wands, come out of the vases and convey the scent to the outside air.

While Mr. Vollertsen said he was happy with the Christmas season as a whole, he felt that it hadn't been worth his while to stay open on Sundays during December. The Sunday schedule, a project of the Oberlin Business Alliance, needs to be revisited, he said.

Those sentiments were echoed across the street by pharmacist Rusty Addleman, owner of Addleman Drug Store. Mr. Addleman said, though, that he felt that winter storms, which seem to hit on the weekends, had hurt Sunday sales.

"The weather was a bummer," he said.

However, he said, he was happy with the results of his close-out sale on front-end merchandise, gift items and candy.

"Overall, we had good results on our sale," he said.

At the Dresser, Karen Metcalf, manager of the cooperative women's store, said that while season results hadn't been added up yet, she felt business had been good.

Sales were pretty much across the board, she said, with the store almost selling out of jewelry and (See STORES on Page 10)

Runway, crops made the news

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Businesses opening, the city planning to expand the current Oberlin runway to 7,000 feet for jets, barnyard animals, storms, bumper crops and bumper prices for bumper crops were just a few of the memorable headlines from 2007.

Some of the headlines were just memories by year end, while other stories will stretch over into 2008 and more years to come.

Here are a few of the memories and headlines that stood out from the past year:

In early January, a couple applied for a zoning variance to help their daughter Julie Cunningham keep her feathered friends inside city limits. Late in 2006, a handful of people in Oberlin asked to keep barnyard-type animals, including chickens and a miniature horse, in town without having an acre of land.

The City Council dealt with the issue for several months before leaving the issue up to voters, who decided in April not to change the ordinance, which requires people to have at least an acre of land to keep them in the city.

Right after the new year, a blizzard slammed the area, dropping up to two feet of snow. From 1,000 to 1,200 power poles were down all

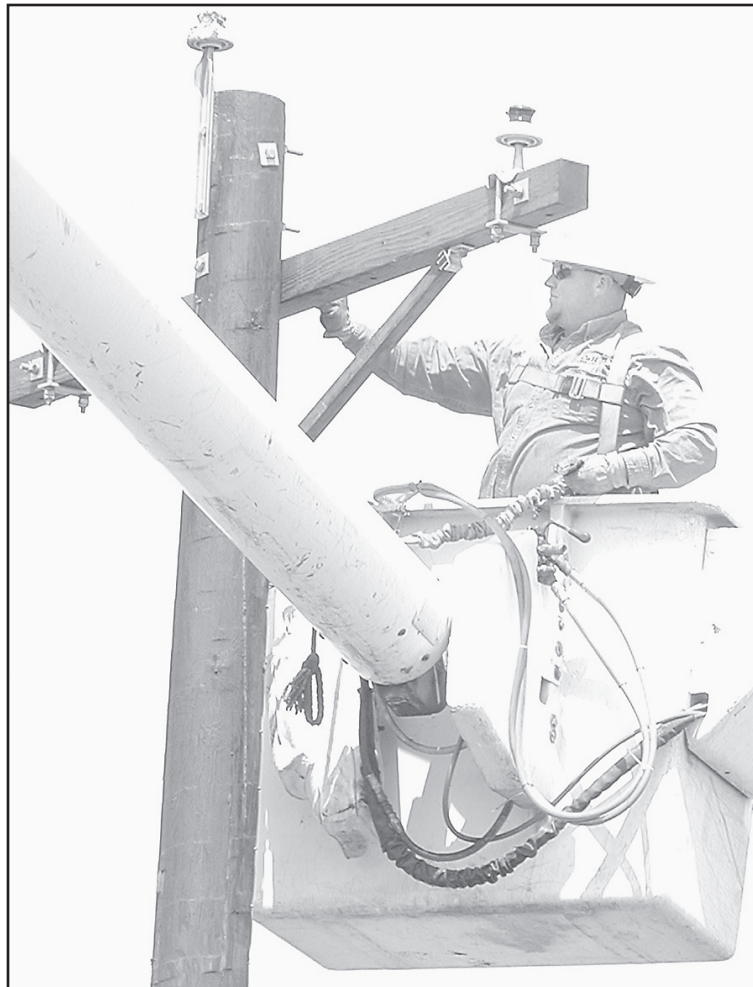
over the area, leaving many in rural Decatur County without power and no way to get to town as the county road crew worked around the clock to dig them out. The National Guard sent a crew and helicopter to the northwest part of the state to help feed stranded cattle.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency sent officials in to try to help local government get money for storm repairs. Checks came to repair roads and to help pay for the man hours of cleaning up the snow.

In the same month, Bus and Coach International held a grand opening at its offices in the former Jennings School, which the company had spent months renovating. With 200-plus people in the old school, the firm unveiled its new motor coach and mentioned the need for a 7,000-foot runway at the Oberlin airport.

City, county and economic development officials met not long after the grand opening to discuss the idea of lengthening the current paved runway from 4,300 to 7,000 feet.

"The longer runway," said City Administrator Gary Shike, "could be important for economic development, and not just to help the Jennings firm. It could help get other businesses here, because a lot of (See YEAR on Page 10)



A LINEMAN WITH C AND H POWER was replacing lines east of Oberlin along U.S. 36 last April which had been damaged over the winter. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Subscribers will get one extra issue this year

Subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald* will receive a bonus this year: an extra issue.

Because there are actually 52.14 weeks a year — not 52 — every so often, a year has 53 Wednesdays. 2008 is one of those years.

Subscribers will get 53 issues of the paper for the price of 52 this

year, a 75-cent bonus.

Most of the time, the year with 53 issues would not have come until next year, but this is leap year — with 52.28 weeks. Because of that extra day, Dec. 31 falls on a Wednesday, the 53rd, this year.

The last 53-paper year was 2003 and the next one will be 2014.

County recycling needs a new home

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Decatur County's 3-year-old recycling program has grown to the point where commissioners talked last month about using an old metal building west of the county shop on U.S. 36 for a permanent recycling center.

The county started the program with a used trailer built with hoppers for each material, from newspaper to glass to plastic. Workers have been hauling the trailer to Colby once a week, but soon that won't be enough.

The county started the program to help keep some of those items out of the landfill, extending its life.

The county pays \$1 per person in the county each year to Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling, which runs a recycling center in Colby where material is gathered and shipped out.

Gaylen Huntley, county noxious weed director, who helps supervise the recycling program, said the way people have responded to the program, they probably will have to start taking the trailer to Colby twice (See RECYCLING on Page 2)

Water, sewer big bills, but horses and chickens drew crowds

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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Oberlin Mayor Joe Stanley said when he looked back on his first eight months in office, he decided that the big things had been made small and the smaller things, big.

Chickens, dogs and miniature horses brought a lot more people to fill the seats at meetings and speak their minds, he said, than the city spending millions of dollars.

"We don't allow chickens or horses in town," he

said. "That ended up being a lot bigger thing than it needed to be, but it proved the process works. If you want to change things, there is a way."

The mayor was referring to a dispute over whether a miniature horse and pet chickens can be kept within the city limits without the owners having an acre of ground. The issue eventually went to a vote of the people, where a petition to change the ordinance was defeated 385-156.

The city has also had to deal with a case of pit-bull fever. A family had to send their pet to

the country after people complained it was a pit bull.

Mr. Stanley pulled the American Kennel Club web page up on his computer to show that that group doesn't recognize any breed called a pit bull. The dog in question was an American staffshire terrier, a pit-bull type breed recognized by the kennel club.

"The pit-bull problem is not over," Mayor Stanley said. "There are others in town. It's a bad deal. We don't like to take people's pets away

from them."

Getting rid of junk cars and making people keep their property neat by mowing the weeds also got people out to City Council meetings, he said.

On the other hand, he said, when the city looked at spending \$4 million on a new water treatment plant, nobody showed to agree, complain or protest.

"Somehow we're capable of deciding to spend \$4 million but not to get rid of your junk car," the (See MAYOR on Page 10)



Joe Stanley

* Year saw news

(Continued from Page 1)
companies that look at moving here ask about the airport.”

In February, Melinda Enfield asked to be able to keep her family's pet chickens in town without an acre of land, even though the requirements were set out in a city ordinance. A petition to place the question was certified with enough signatures to place the question on the April city ballot.

At the Decatur County Hospital, the board and staff started to prepare for construction of an 11-room specialty clinic addition for outpatients on the east side of the building, near the emergency entrance.

The Decatur County Good Samaritan Center celebrated 50 years of service and the Oberlin School District Superintendent Kelly Glodt announced his resignation after accepting a job in Pierre, S.D.

About the same time, the school board voted to not renew the contracts of four teachers who had worked at the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, which closed in 2006. Those teachers — Elaine Marcuson, Aurelia Jackson, Susan May and Kimberly Witt — lost their jobs, with Keith Grafel reduced to part time.

In April, city voters rejected the ordinance change which would have allowed chickens in town in a 385-156 vote.

The school board decided kindergarten will go all day year for the first time. The change was implemented in the fall.

Supporters of a new livestock building at the Decatur County Fairground announced that over \$59,000 had been raised from supporters, memorials and other fund raisers. Work began on the metal building, which was done in time to use at the fair in August.

That same month, a lawsuit filed by the owners of Centennial Bowl and Red Crown Lounge against their insurance company, a unit of Lloyd's of London, was dismissed "with prejudice." Owners said that the settlement isn't enough to rebuild the alley, nearly destroyed by an arson fire in May 2005.

In May, C&H Power Line of Oklahoma, hired by Prairie Land Electric Cooperative to rebuild around 1,200 miles of lines damaged in the blizzard and ice storms in late 2006 and early 2007, moved into town. The firm bought the Oberlin Inn for workers to live in, as well as several houses in town.

The frontier landmark Elephant Rock, just east of Traer, lost its head and trunk after a big rain just before a scheduled tour of the area.

Four men came for interviews with the Oberlin School Board to replace the superintendent. Dr. Pat Cullen from Nebraska got the job.

The city put its new sewer plant south of town to the test. The lagoon system wasn't discharging any water yet, and Sappa Creek dried up.

After gathering hundreds of signatures to send to state officials, county treasurer's offices won a fight to keep driver's license renewals in courthouses across the state.

After cooler weather in late spring helped the wheat to grow, a hail storm in early June damaged fields near Cedar Bluffs, Danbury and east to Norcatour.

In June, the Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever reached an agreement with the Oberlin City Council to lease the former lake bottom at Sappa Park for \$1 a year for between three and 50 years.

In the same month, the city received word that the new waste water treatment plant had been finished under budget by about \$880,000.

In the same month, wheat harvest started, with early numbers showing a patchwork anywhere from 35 to 70 bushels per acre. When it was all done, though, there was a lot of wheat at prices higher than any in recent years.

In July, the Decatur Co-op Association said the wheat crop broke the previous record of 3.26 million bushels, totaling 4 million bushels for the year. D&S Grain in Traer reported the harvest was twice as big in bushels as the previous year.

In the middle of the year, members of the city airport committee, county and city officials, economic development officials and others turned heads at the capital in Topeka with a proposal for a 7,000-foot runway in Oberlin. A bus load of officials



TALKING TO A CROWD of about 200 people at the old Jennings school, Bus and Coach International President Phil Oldridge explained a little of what the company does during an open house in January.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

met with employees of the Kansas Department of Transportation, a representative from Congressman Jerry Moran's office and others.

In August, work at the intersection of U.S. 36 and U.S. 83 started under a state "geometric improvement" project to put new concrete throughout the intersection and a section of U.S. 36, with asphalt and new curbs east to Penn Ave. The road was torn up until fall.

A renewable energy company, Sunflower Wind LLC, approached the City Council about selling wind power to the city. The company said it planned to build a wind farm just outside of town, but the council was wary of a requirement that it terminate its existing supply contracts.

Later in the month, Sunflower Wind proposed a new contract for a higher rate, allowing the city to keep its current contracts. A third proposal would have allowed the city to take bids, giving the wind firm a "first right of refusal."

The new metal livestock building was dedicated during the fair with around \$20,000 needed to complete electrical work and fence. Hundreds of people turned out for the dedication and a fund-raising barbecue.

In September, 18 city, county and economic development people traveled to Hays to pitch the idea of a 7,000-foot runway to the secretary of the Department of Transportation and other state officials.

In the same month, the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce received a letter of resignation from seven members of the Amusement Authority board,

which runs the rides and games of the home-owned carnival at the county fair. The letter complained that safety was being compromised during the fair. New members will be elected at the upcoming Chamber annual banquet in January.

In the same month, Hansen Mueller Grain moved its main operation to a new building and bunkers off of U.S. 36 to allow for more space and a speedier dumping process. The firm kept its downtown elevator.

The council agreed to negotiate with Sunflower Wind to buy power, with the help of an independent electrical consultant. At the same time, the city backed a search for possible uses for the old Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, including possibly a boarding school, begun by Superintendent Pat Cullen.

In early October, wheat prices jumped to over \$8 a bushel while farmers started to pick corn, milo and sunflowers. The fall crops filled elevators to past capacity and crops were stored on the ground all over.

The Decatur County Fair Foundation announced two large donations to help finish the livestock building, totalling \$15,000.

Those working on a longer runway talked with the Kansas National Guard about the idea of a training site here using the runway.

Also in October, the City Council decided to table an application to borrow \$4.218 million to build a water treatment plant. The city's water has too much uranium to meet tough new federal standards, but the council put the application on hold, waiting to see what happens.

Sunflower Wind came back to the city in November with a new proposal to sell power to the city for 9.1 cents per kilowatt hour starting in 2009, when current contracts run out. The proposal included a "reverse bidding" structure, allowing other electric companies to bid on the city's business.

Plans for a new theater, Golden Age Center and bowling alley on Main Street were unveiled by economic development leaders. There was no timetable as to when the new center would be built, and no plan for raising the half million or so needed to build it.

In December, plans for the new runway continued to move along with the price tag estimated at \$12 million, including about \$800,000 from the city and county and money from the Federal Aviation Administration and the Kansas Department of Transportation. The city's engineering firm still has to do the environmental assessment.

After about five months of talking with Sunflower Wind, the council decided to cut off negotiations. Council members said they had too many unanswered questions, no financial statements and the wind company lacked experience.

As the year closed, Oberlin made headlines with the story of a postcard dated 1914 and addressed to Bernice Martin's sister-in-law which wasn't delivered until this fall. The story, which hit the Associated Press wire, was picked up by newspapers all over the U.S., by the Today Show, CNN, in London, Japan, Iraq and all of over the world.

*Mayor recalls year's big deals

(Continued from Page 1)
mayor said with a shrug.

He said he found this disappointing, because he doesn't know if the citizens don't care or just think that their elected officials can handle the money problems.

Mr. Stanley served on the council four years before he was elected mayor in April. He was appointed to fill two years of an unexpired term when Ken Shobe became mayor and was then elected to a four-year term. He left that after two when he was elected mayor, and Marcia Lohoefer was appointed to take his seat on the council.

With five council members, he said, the mayor only votes when there is a tie — an unlikely event if all are present. Mr. Stanley said he has not had to break any ties.

"I guess the mayor doesn't have a lot of power," he said. "They have a lot of perceived power."

That doesn't stop people from coming into his hardware store downtown to find out what's going on or to ask him to fix problems, he said, or from stopping him on the street. However, he said, he hasn't received many calls at home, for which he is grateful.

Mr. Stanley said that he thinks Oberlin has a good council, and there's been a lot to keep them busy, he said, dealing with problems including increasing the length of the airport runway, an aging swimming pool, water and sewage treatment problems forced on the city by the state and federal governments, street improvement needs, park upkeep, cemetery maintenance and, of course, livestock.

On the water treatment plant, the mayor says he thinks that the city will have to do something.

"We're stuck doing what they (the federal Environmental Protection Agency and state Department of Health and Environment) tell us to do," he said. "We can protest and not like it, but in the end we'll do what they want us to do, because they have the money we want..."

It's not that he believes Oberlin needs a water-treatment plant. Over the last century or so, he pointed out, life expectancy has increased by 30 years. People have been drinking the same water all those years, he

said, but now all of the sudden, the government says it's not good for us anymore.

The problem is that all the drinking water has to meet the highest standard, he said. That not only includes the water that comes out of the tap at the house but also that used to water parks and wash cars. The city, he said, is stuck treating all the water, an expensive operation.

On the airport, the project is still moving, he said. He thinks it should be a positive for the town but it will take some time.

The city has been putting money away to fix the streets, the mayor said, but those jobs are so expensive that what it can save up for five to six years will only do about five blocks, which isn't enough to fix the problem.

"It's expensive and there is no revenue behind it," he said, noting that water and sewer treatment plants are likewise expensive but people pay fees to pay for those.

The mayor thinks the city will have to look for a different way to pay for fixing streets.

The city will need to find the money somewhere to fix its aging swimming pool, he said, noting that civic centers and pools enhance a town but are expensive to run.

"We will burn more in gas heating water than (the pool) will take in," he said, "and that's just one of the expenses."

The city is working to replace trees in the parks and cemeteries as they die and keep those places looking neat and trim, he said. This includes Sappa Park, which will have a part-time caretaker soon.

Mr. Stanley said it's been an interesting eight months.

"I enjoy learning how things work and how they have to work," he said. "I may not like what I find out but ... you adjust."

Being mayor or on the council, he said, is a lot like being a referee in sports, a job he did for years.

You can be a good referee and have everybody hate you or you can be a good referee and be like.

Mr. Stanley said that after he retired from refereeing high school wrestling a few years ago, he was invited to two coaches' retirement parties.

*Stores report success after holiday season

(Continued from Page 1)
purses. She said the shop has not had many returns, always a good sign.

She, too, noted that Sundays had been quiet and said her store's men's-night promotion drew little interest. Part of the problem with that promotion, she thought, was inconsistency — the store held one two years ago but not last year — and a lack of advertising.

"We'd all like to know how to better serve people," she added.

While his fellow merchants were happy, Robert Groneweg, owner of

R&M Service Center, was closer to ecstatic. He said that his business was up 20 to 30 percent in December, with people buying every type of appliance he carries. His best seller, however, and the item he advertises the most, was his Traeger barbecue grills.

Mr. Groneweg said that he believes good farm prices helped his business. He said a more optimistic mood is evident after two good harvests. This makes people feel more inclined to buy big-ticket items like washers and refrigerators, he said.



Cover Your Acres Winter Conference

January 22 and 23, 2008 at the Gateway in Oberlin, KS

Kansas State University and the Northwest Kansas Crop Residue Alliance

Discussing the latest technology, methods, and conservation practices to improve crop production on the High Plains

Time	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4	Room 5	Exhibit Hall
7:45 - 8:15	Registration					
8:15 - 8:35	Welcome					
	University Sessions			Industry Sessions		
8:45 - 9:33	New Corn Seed Traits for No-till	Improving Your Success in No-till	N recommendations for Wheat	Outlook for Sorghum, Bioenergy, Food & Export		
9:40 - 10:28	Grain Marketing & Revenue Protection	No-till Wheat 101	P Placement and Rate in No-till and Strip-till	Benefits of Chloride on wheat and row crops	Wheat precision Ag Can Do For You	Sponsor
10:35 - 11:23	Improving Your Success in No-till	Managing pH in No-till	Comparing Corn and Grain Sorghum	The State of Fertilizer in 2008		Displays
11:30 - 12:30	Farmer Panel: Crop Rotations	Spray Application Technology*				
12:40 - 1:40	P-Placement and Rate in No-till and Strip-till	Soil Quality Change in No-till			Noon Meal	
1:50 - 2:38	Ten Crop Sequences Transition to No-till	Effect of Residue on Crop Water Budget	Managing pH in No-till	Plant Stand Management		
2:45 - 3:33	N Recommendations for Wheat	New Corn Seed Traits for No-till	Improving Capture and Use of Water	John Deere Technology Improvements and Growth	National Sunflower Association	Sponsor
3:40 - 4:28	Comparing Corn and Grain Sorghum Performance	Water Rights and Depleting Water	Effect of Residue on Crop Water budget	Importance of Long Term Care in Estate Planning for Family Farms	Corn Amylase-An output trait that pays a premium	Displays
4:35 - 5:23	Improving Capture and Use of Water	Spray Application Technology*	Water Rights and Depleting Water	Cellulosic Ethanol	Avoiding Strip-till Mistakes	
5:30 - 7:30	Industry Sponsored Bull Session (refreshments and heavy hors d'oeuvres provided) in the commercial display area will be held on both nights of the conference.					

CEU credits for CCAs have been applied for all university sessions except farmer panels. *CEU credits for 1A for Commercial Pesticide Applicators have been approved.

Diamond Sponsors: Hoxie Implement, Southwest Implement, and the National Sunflower Association

Registration - The conference will be held for two days with the same program each day. Early registration must be postmarked by January 16. Please register early. **\$20 Tues 22 Wed 23 Early Registration - Attend all the sessions for one day. Please mark which day. \$38 Early Registration to attend both days, which will have the same program each day. \$40 Registration per day after January 16 or at the door.** All registrations include proceedings for conference along with refreshments and meals. For questions, please call 785-462-6281. Mail registration and check, payable to KSU to the following address: Northwest Area Office, Attn: Brian Olson, PO Box 786, Colby KS 67701. Program will be held regardless of weather.

Please include the following information:
 Name: _____ Address: _____ City, State, Zip _____ Phone: _____