

PROM MARSHAL LACEY REAM and her date, **Jebb Tally**, waited at the head of the line for their second pass during the promenade. **Amber Mason** and **Nolan Evans** were second in the line. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

City asked to support new motel

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin City Council might be asked to issue taxable industrial revenue bonds and grant a property tax break for a new motel, members heard on Thursday, but the council didn't make any decisions.

City Administrator Gary Shike said an unnamed developer is interested in building a motel here. The man is working with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. on the project, he said.

The question is if the council would be willing for the city to issue the bonds, which would be repaid by the developer, not the taxpayers. The city wouldn't be liable for the debt service, Mr. Shike said, nor would the city have to sell the bonds. The developer would benefit with an exemption from state sales taxes on materials purchased.

The other question was for a property tax abatement.

Does the motel have to be in the city limits? asked Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener. No, said Mr. Shike.

If the developer isn't building in the city, asked Councilman Rob McFee, why should the council support it, especially if no taxes would be collected for 10 years?

Is the project proposed for inside city limits? asked Councilman Ray Ward. Carolyn Burtis, a member of the Economic Development board, who was there in place of Marketing Director Connie Grafel, said that

Council Roundup

At a meeting Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Listened to the mayor as he pointed a finger at the managing editor of *The Oberlin Herald*, saying the city doesn't have a plan for cats in town, that any "plan" came from the newspaper. Story below left

- Heard that a developer might want the city to issue taxable industrial revenue bonds and a property tax abatement for a possible new motel, but didn't make any decisions. Story at left.

- Heard that a representative from the Kansas National Guard had looked at the former Sappa Valley Youth Ranch as a training site. Story to come.

- Talked with 10 barbecue fans, who reserved the shelter house at Sappa Park for a cookoff the first weekend in October. Story to come.

Wind drives promenade into gym

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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With the wind whipping through town and storm clouds brewing, students showed off their colorful dresses and tuxedo choices inside the high school gym, rather than on Main Street, Saturday night.

Students in the junior and senior class and their dates spent the day getting their hair done, picking up flowers and washing vehicles for the big evening.

Although the promenade usually goes down Main Street, this year the students walked inside the high school gym. The bleachers on both sides were packed with family members and people wanting to see the students before they headed to the dinner and dance.

Principal Charlie Haag said school officials decided to move the promenade inside mainly because of the wind. Around 3 p.m., he said, he met with district staff, who helped move the bleachers out for the audience. Around

3:30 p.m., the decision was made and a call was placed to KFNF Radio to get the change on the radio. Alvera Bruggeman, with First National Bank, was asked to have the message put on the bank's sign downtown.

Other than the weather, said Mr. Haag, prom went very well. The meal was good, the kids danced and most of them stayed around. The guys looked handsome and the girls all had pretty dresses.

(See WIND on Page 5A)

Mayor says paper created plan for cats

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Oberlin's mayor pointed a finger at the managing editor of *The Oberlin Herald* at a meeting Thursday night, saying that the city doesn't have a plan for cats in town, that any "plan" came from the newspaper.

At the meeting Thursday, April 17, the council discussed complaints about feral cats in town and others that roam for about an hour, with members throwing out ideas of how to deal with the animals. No decisions were made.

An article in the Wednesday,

April 23, issue of the newspaper recounted the discussion, noting that no vote was taken.

At the meeting Thursday night, Mayor Joe Stanley said he was hoping there would be more people to talk about the cat issue. Although there were 10 people in the audience, none of them made any comments.

Mayor Stanley asked City Clerk Karen Larson to read the minutes from the last meeting because, he said, the city doesn't have a plan for cats. If there was a plan, he said, it

(See MAYOR on Page 3A)

Oberlin priest praying for family hit by storm

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**
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Father Henry Saw Lone stands at the altar of Sacred Heart Church in Oberlin and prays for his family in Myanmar.

He prays for their welfare without knowing if they are homeless, sick, hungry or even alive in the the Far East nation, the former British colony of Burma.

Father Saw Lone is from Karen, one of four states hardest hit in the

early morning hours of May 3 by Cyclone Nargis, a category 4 hurricane packing winds of 120 mph.

The priest has been in Oberlin, ministering to the Catholic parishes here and in Leoville and Selden since July 2006.

The three years before that, he served at the cathedral in Salina. He was ordained a priest in Myanmar in 1994.

In Norton, Father Vincent Thu

(See PRIEST on Page 5A)



AFTER LUNCH FRIDAY, Oberlin volunteer fire fighters put out a house fire on Garfield Avenue. The home, belonging to Kirk Brown and rented by Allen Robey, was destroyed by the electrical fire. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Flames destroy man's home, killing pets

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Smoke billowed out of every opening Friday as flames shot from a front window of the white house at 107 N. Garfield.

Allen Robey, who works at Raye's Grocery, lived in the home, although it's owned by his employer, Kirk Brown. Mr. Robey said he was out in the yard working on his car when

he smelled something burning. He said at first he thought the neighbors were out burning something in the yard, but about 20 minutes later he saw smoke coming out of his house.

Mr. Robey said he went to the neighbor's house to call 911. Six Oberlin Fire Department volunteers came with two engines and knocked out the fire in 15-20 minutes, said

Chief Bill Cathcart. The call came in about 12:45 p.m.

Fire fighters working two hoses knocked down the flames, he said. They set up a large fan in the front yard, blowing the smoke away from them and the house.

Some used axes to make holes for the smoke to escape. Others worked off a ladder and some on the ground.

Chief Catchcart said the fire began in the front entryway, where an extension cord had been run through the door to power a battery charger in the driveway. Over time, he said, the door may have damaged insulation on the extension cord. Firemen were at the scene cleaning up and putting out hot spots until about 2:25 p.m.

(See FIRE on Page 2A)

Graduation section inside today's paper

Inside today's Oberlin Herald is the 2008 Graduation section, including information on seniors from Decatur Community and Golden Plains high schools.

The section has pictures of the graduating seniors from each school and data on what the students were involved in during their years in school, scholarships they've won and their plans for the future.

THE OBERLIN HERALD'S
Graduation '08

Decatur Community High School — Golden Plains High School



Forty seniors plan to graduate Sunday at school

Forty seniors will receive diplomas Sunday afternoon as they become the latest class to graduate from Decatur Community High School.

The ceremony at 2 p.m. in the high school gym will feature music by the high school choir, DCHS Singers and two students on keyboards.

The choir will sing "Keep Holding On," the DCHS Singers "Maybe Someday" and Mary Olson and Rhiannon Davies will play keyboards.

Principal Charlie Haag said Gage Andrew Reichert will be the class valedictorian and Jessica Elizabeth Bremer, the salutatorian. The seniors have put together a slide show again this year, featuring pictures of the class, said Mr. Haag.

The class of 2008 includes Lacie Ann Alstrom, Chantelle April Beneda, Kassia Marie Bryan, Joseph Patrick Carter, Andrew Ryan Dempewolf, Colt Stephen Diederich, Kenzie Dawn Fisher, Royal Jonathan Fisher, Amber Lyn Gaede, Kaitlyn Dawn Gillespie, Heather Sue Glott,

Cody William Haas, Melissa Renee Hasty, Rebecca Leigh Helm, Ashley Marie Huntley, Shelby LeAnn Jeffrey, Chenaniah Nathaniel Langness, Jordan Isaiah Macfee, Ace Harold Manning, Jared Ture Albert Marcuson, Amber Elizabeth Mason, Jamie Leroy Miller, Alyssa Diane Montgomery, Shanna Rae Pearce, Jennifer Jean Ploussard, Lacey Jean Ream, Amie

Also Ritter, Alexandria Neolle Samson, LeAnna Kathryn Sheaffer, Kyra Ann Smith, Jebb Ryan Tally, David Franklin Urban, Desiree Michele Vilar, Cameron Francis Weishapl, Rory Anne Olivia Wendelin, Nicole Elizabeth Wessel, Sean Michael Ybarra and Kayla Maria Zodrow.

One thing that has really impressed him and people in town about the class, said Mr. Haag, is that they are just a super bunch of kids. That's evident through the community service the class recently did at Sappa Park, the golf course, The Gateway and museum, he said.

The gym will open at 1 p.m. for families who want to get seats for the ceremony, he said.

'Final destination' not on his itinerary

Call it the flight from heck, I guess. Not bad enough to be terrible. But no fun at all. We've been flying all year on business and haven't had a trip like this. Try to take a vacation, though, and it's hard to relax. At least on U.S. Airways.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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First of all, I think our reservation was haunted.

It was in the computer, but it never would work right. In Denver on the way east, it wouldn't allow the nice lady to give us seats out of Charlotte to Augusta, Ga., where our daughters live.

On the way back, it wouldn't give me a seat out of Charlotte to Denver, and when it finally did, it was a dreaded middle seat in a different row from Cynthia. Oh well, I thought, I see her all the time.

Since we planned to stay with the kids, who have washers, we traveled light, everything in our carry-on bags except the medicine duffel with all the liquids. That we have to check, but Cynthia kept stuffing it with gifts for the kids, coffee, books, Rotary trash bags, bricks, light stuff like that.

It's only a medium blue duffel, but it must have weighted 40 pounds by the time she was done.

The first problem came when we got the the U.S. Air counter in Denver.

"Charlotte? That's a code-share flight with United," the nice lady said. "You have to check in over there."

She pointed across the terminal to the dreaded west side, where Denver's No. 1 carrier lurks. Passengers have been lost in the strap maze "over there" for weeks at a time, I've heard.

And that meant I'd have to break my solemn vow to never, ever fly on United again.

Sure enough, the line to the ticket counters stretched around the corner and out into the main concourse. Managers were telling people to go out to the curb and check in with the skycaps.

The line there was only four or five people, but the skycap could only check our bags. He gave us printed cards to get us through security and cards that said to check in with U.S. Air in Charlotte.

At least, I thought, we're in United's computer.

Then we went back to U.S. Air, on the other side of the building, to see if we could get our seats out of Charlotte. The nice lady spent half an hour trying before admitting that just wasn't possible.

Soooooo, hike out to United's gate, see about seats out of Denver. They had some middle seats in two different rows, but the nice lady at the counter talked some guy into trading places with me. He got to sit in the exit row, with more leg room. By then, we were boarding, setting a pattern that would follow us through our flights.

I was beginning to blame myself for booking the trip on the Internet.

"This is how they punish people who use Orbitz," I said, only half smiling.

At Charlotte, we were late and had only 40 minutes to do the 3,000 meters to the commuter gates. We made it, panting. We found that the

computer in Charlotte would give us seats. It was time to board.

But though we'd made it, our bag hadn't. At least, it didn't get off the plane in Augusta with us.

"Probably be on the next flight," the ticket agent said.

And it was. They delivered it to youngest daughter's house later that night.

Fast forward a week, a week of good sleep, good times, good fun. We get to the Augusta airport, quiet, peaceful, a brand new building.

The computer will give Cynthia a seat to Denver, but not me.

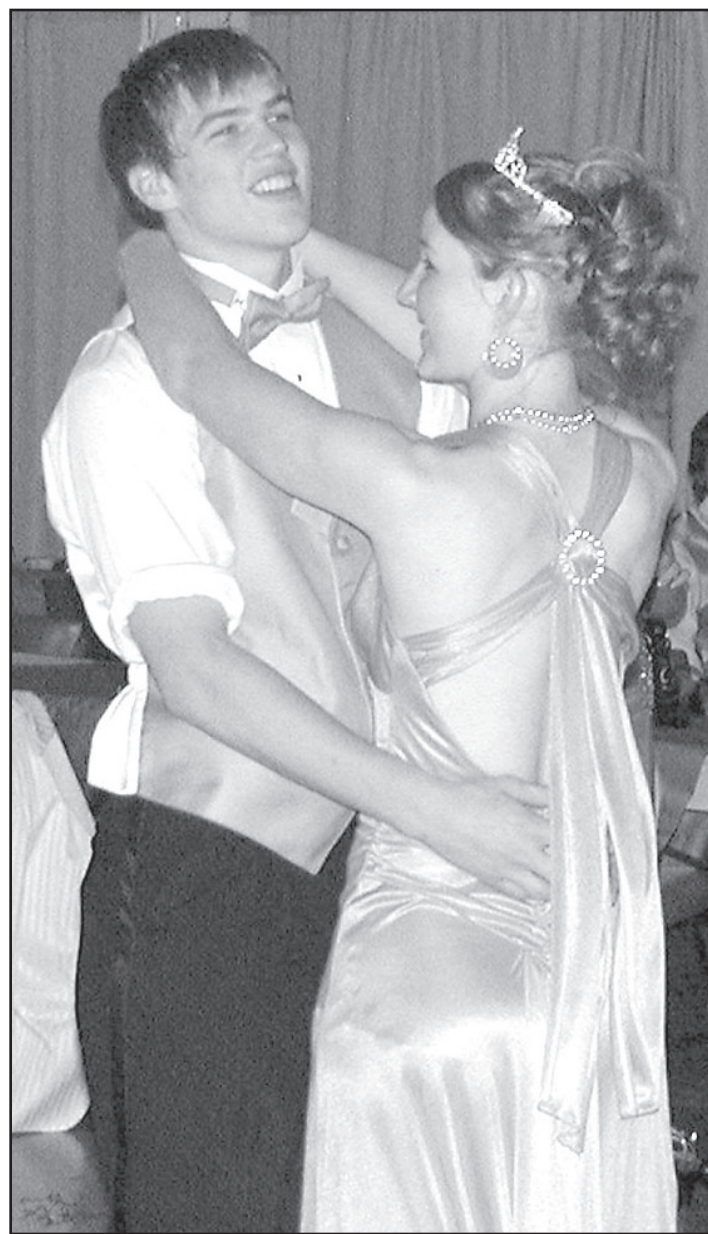
Why me?

Finally, the supervisor figured out that if you split us into two reservations, the machine would give me a seat. Who knows why? I still think the reservation was haunted, the data corrupted or maybe we were being punished.

At Charlotte, we had 45 minutes to do the 3,000 again, Terminal E to Terminal B. We made it again. Again, the plane was full, but this time there was no hope anyone would move to let us sit together, not even any of the half dozen dead-heading crew members.

On the bright side, without Cynthia to talk to, I got a lot of work done on the way to Denver, including this column.

You can judge what that's worth. I just hope the next trip is better. I booked it on Orbitz.



AT THE PROM Saturday night, Queen Jennifer Ploussard and King Gage Reichert danced after being crowned.

—Herald staff photo by Sarah Marcuson

*Wind pushes walk inside at promenade

(Continued from Page 1A)

Jennifer Ploussard was named queen and Gage Reichert king.

At midnight, the students changed into less formal attire for the after-prom party sponsored by the Oberlin Rotary Club.

Colleen Rittmann, who helped organize the after party, said things went well. A firm out of Wichita brought an inflatable obstacle course, a velcro climbing wall, a mechanical bull and digital karaoke. In Morgan Theater, Rotary members showed movies. They served pizza, jalepeño poppers, mozzarella sticks and buffalo wings as snacks.

Around 3:30 a.m., the Rotary

members started to draw for prizes, including small refrigerators suitable for a college dorm room, microwaves, \$100 scholarships from Rotary, gift cards, Kansas State University and University of Kansas items and DVD players. The prizes, said Mrs. Rittmann, were either donated or purchased with cash donations from area businesses.

During the drawing, she said, there were probably around 65 kids still around.

At 4 a.m. the party ended and club members helped pack up the games and clean the arena. About 10 Rotarians volunteered their time for the project.

Reader says target 'mildcats'

To the Editor:

I've been reading with interest the prevalence of 'cat issues' in *The Oberlin Herald*.

Apparently the city has a problem with cats, or not; a problem with feeding cats, or not; or a problem with cats living in the storm drains, or not. Sometimes the biggest problem is figuring out if you have a problem, or not. I wish the City Council luck on this one.

I couldn't help but recall a possible solution succinctly expressed by Councilperson Rhonda May: "... a license ... would separate pets from the wild cats." (April 23, 2008, page 10A — printed twice, for emphasis, no doubt!) I wholeheartedly agree! The biggest problem, as viewed from my vantage point near Lawrence, is that there are far too many Wildcats! I strongly recommend that the City Council take strong, precedent-setting measures to rid the great city of Oberlin of all those Wildcats!

All it takes is one city to set the

Letters to the Editor

ball rolling and soon the entire state can finally be free of them! Be sure to inform the city of Manhattan of your progress, however, because I suspect that's where they're all coming from. They seem to have at least two breeds there, and the easiest to banish are those who are just learning the concept of sports. That "mildcat" group, which reportedly really do hide in the storm drains, is too weak to be of concern. I commend the Oberlin City Council for their time on this issue, or not, and especially applaud Councilperson May for her foresight and accurate

analysis, and I especially thank Editor Haynes for the invitation to express this opinion.

- 2008 NCAA Orange Bowl Champions!
- 2008 NCAA National Basketball Champions!
- 2008 National Debate Champions!

It just keeps getting better and better!

Rock Chalk Jayhawk!

Ernie May
professor of biology science
Kansas City, Kansas
Community College

First chickens, now the cats

To the Editor:

I knew this day would come, the day when the city started taking your pets away. Do we live in a free country? I for one don't think so.

To all cat and animal lovers: good luck fighting for your rights.

God will never leave me or forsake me.

Julie Cunningham, Oberlin

Crews join search for lost pilot

Decatur County sheriff's officers, the ambulance director, firemen and the emergency preparedness director joined searchers Saturday afternoon and night to try to find the pilot of a small plane that had crashed.

The pilot called 911 on his cell phone, reaching the Phillips County dispatch office. He told dispatchers both his legs were broken, and he couldn't move. The man was unable to say where he was, though, and searchers had a hard time finding him.

While the search spread to at least five counties, the man eventually was found 1:15 a.m. Sunday in Phillips County.

Decatur County Sheriff Ken Badsky said he received a call around 4:50 p.m. from about a downed plane, apparently somewhere along highway K-9 in the south end of Decatur, Norton or Phillips counties.

He said he and Undersheriff Randy McHugh and Deputy Barry Richards went out immediately to start searching in the southeast part of the county south of Clayton and Jennings and into Norton County. Sheriff Badsky said the Norton County sheriff also had people out searching from the Norton line to Sebelius Lake.

Patti Skubal, Decatur County emergency preparedness director, said she was at her house coordinating air and ground support and keeping everyone in the loop. She said she notified the state Division of Emergency Management to let them know what was going on.

Fire Chief Bill Cathcart said volunteers from the Oberlin, Norcatur and Jennings departments helped in the search, covering areas south and east of Oberlin.

"We just searched everywhere we could think of," he said.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that the pilot, Michael Wade Westendorf, 42, Olathe, took off from Atwood and was on his way to Lee's Summit, Mo., a Kansas City suburb, when he started to see and smell smoke. The cockpit filled and as Mr. Westendorf tried to make an emergency landing, the plane flipped, breaking both wings off.

The patrol said the plane is a 1990 VariEze, a lightweight, single-engine design built from a kit, with composite, forward-sweeping wings. Mr. Westendorf was taken to a hospital in Phillipsburg, then flown to Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, Neb.

Sheriff Badsky said the Decatur County crew looked until about 8 p.m., when some came in and others stayed in the field. All of the crew went back out about 10 p.m.

Throughout the search, Mr. Westendorf was calling in by cell phone, describing what he could see. One report was that he thought he was within 300 yards of a highway.

At 12:30 a.m., though, the search was called off and the Decatur County contingent went home.

The Phillips County sheriff's office issued a press release about the incident, but the sheriff wasn't available to talk. The release says that when Mr. Westendorf first

called in, he thought he was about 35 to 45 miles east of Atwood.

The Phillips County sheriff's office, fire department, React team and the Kansas Highway Patrol started a search about two miles southeast of Phillipsburg.

More information revealed that the airplane could be farther south into Rooks County. The Phillips County departments helped look in Rooks County, too. The search was put on hold as information came in that the plane could be at the Decatur-Norton county line.

"At approximately 10:30 p.m., the U.S. Air Force Search and Rescue Information Center advised the Phillips County dispatch that they had recalculated the coordinates and they believed that the pilot was within a 10-mile radius from the intersection of West Road 500 and West Victory Road in Phillips County," the department said.

The search started again. Mr. Westendorf was found around 1:15 a.m. by members of the Logan Fire Department about half a mile north of the intersection of West Thunder Road and West 1100 Road in Phillips County, several miles from the spot the Air Force had calculated.

Sheriff Badsky said the pilot was by himself and didn't have any life-threatening injuries, although he was taken to the hospital.

The search went well, he said, with Mrs. Skubal doing everything an administrator was supposed to do to help, the sheriff said

* Priest can only pray, hope family in Burma is all right

(Continued from Page 1A)

Laing of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church also prays for his family, but with the assurance that they are safe.

Father Thu Laing is from the Delta area, one of the hardest hit sections of the country, but while there has been damage to his parents' and brothers' and sisters' homes and property, everyone is fine, he said, during an interview Monday.

News from Myanmar has been sketchy, but it is believed that more than 10,000 people are dead and another 100,000 missing.

The military junta which runs the country has been reluctant to allow foreign aid workers in.

At first, according to news reports, the government seized all aid, saying that it would distribute the supplies.

However in the last few days, with pressure from the United Nations, help is slowly flowing into the mostly rural, agrarian country.

Father Saw Lone said that he occasionally talks to his family on the telephone but that with electrical power out and outside jour-



Mr. Saw Lone

nalists mostly banned from the county, it is impossible to find out what's happening.

Both his parents are dead, he said, but as of Sunday, there was no word from his two sisters,

brother, 15 nieces and nephews and numerous aunts and uncles.

He says he has been listening to the British Broadcasting Corp. broadcasts and surfing the Internet for news on the area, which is mostly rural.

His sister Bernedetta is a teacher and her husband is a rice farmer, he said.

His sister Angela is a housewife and her husband is unemployed. His brother Johnny runs an oriental version of a convenience store out of his home.

Father Saw Lone said that his oldest niece is in college and wants to become a Catholic nun.

*Motel looks for help

(Continued from Page 1A)

In order to do the bonds, said Councilman Jay Anderson, would it require a two-thirds majority of the council. Is the developer requiring a motion tonight? he asked.

Ideally, he would like an answer, said Mrs. Burtis, because then the economic development board could take it back to the developer.

Although the bonds are issued by the city so they qualify for a tax break, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, there isn't any obligation to the taxpayers. The debt would be paid by the property owners. The city can do property tax abatement, he said, but doesn't have to.

What would be the cost to the city? said Mrs. Lohoefer.

Typically, said Mr. Hirsch, the developer pays all costs.

Is there any downside to the bonds? asked Mr. Ward. Mr. Hirsch said he didn't know what it would be. With the industrial revenue bonds, he said, the developer receives an automatic exemption from state sales tax.

What has the developer asked for? asked Mr. Hirsch. Mrs. Burtis said she couldn't say since she wasn't at the last Economic Development meeting. The corporation members want to find out if the city is open to offering the bonds or to the property tax abatement.

Is there an estimate of the property tax? asked Mrs. Lohoefer.

Not without knowing what the value of the project will be, said Mr. Hirsch.

It would be nice to meet with the developer, said Dr. Anderson. He said he is interested in supporting the project, but would like more information.

Another motel or hotel isn't a luxury, said Mrs. Lohoefer; it is a necessity. The city needs more rooms.

If there is any way to have the developer come in and answer some questions, that would be good, said Mr. Ward. He said he is in favor of the idea, but wants to know if it would be built inside the city limits?

Dr. Anderson said it might be a good idea to take a trip to Curtis, Neb., to see a motel the developer is building there.

WE ALWAYS WELCOME NEW PATIENTS TO OUR DENTAL PRACTICE!

The office of Dr. Gary Fredrickson was established in Oberlin in 1982. We offer the services of Robyn Rouse who has been a dental hygienist for 18 years. We also provide for visits from two orthodontists, Dr. John Haugen and Dr. Brad Hoppens, in our office.

Our office hours are Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. We are open during the lunch hour to offer more convenient scheduling for you. We enjoy children in our practice and recommend their first visit at the age of three.

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