

Extension asks Decatur, Norton to join in district

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
kldavis@nwkansas.com

Members of the Decatur County Extension Council have asked the county commissioners to consider forming an extension district, joining councils Decatur and Norton counties.

Extension agents Byron Hale and Tranda Watts joined council members Ron Jansonious, Susan May and Amanda Grafel at a meeting Tuesday, April 22, to explain the idea. Later in the meeting, Chris Onstead, northwest area coordinator for Kansas State University Research and Extension, joined the group.

Last fall, said Mr. Jansonious, the group first talked to the commissioners about the idea. He said Norton County commissioners, the Norton County Extension Council and the Decatur County council have all voted to approve the district. The Decatur County commissioners, said Mr. Jansonious, would also have to approve the switch.

At this point, said Mr. Hale, the council needs some advice from the commissioners. Is this a good idea? he asked. Does the council move forward with this, or is it not a good idea?

So everyone involved has OK'd this except us? asked Commissioner Doyle Brown. Would this mean the two counties would share an agent?

No, said Mr. Hale. As of now, the two would maintain the same staff, there just wouldn't be a county line. Both courthouses will have a secretary and an agent, he said, as they do now.

"The things I'm well schooled in," said Mr. Hale, "would benefit the whole district, and the same for the agent in Norton."

Mr. Hale said he has a degree in agriculture business, but his specialty is in leadership, and Mrs. Watts, who works out of Colby, runs the program for food, nutrition, health and safety in five counties. Both help organize county fairs and 4-H programs in their counties.

If someone wants some information, asked Mr. Brown, will they have to drive to Norton or Decatur County depending on whose expertise the question is in?

No, said Mr. Hale, it will work the same as it does now. He said if he doesn't know the answer, he will find out or refer the person to the other agent.

What are the cost benefits? said Mr. Brown. Most of that will come because Kansas State University gives more money for a district, said Mr. Jansonious.

What this does, said Commissioner Ralph Unger, is take the commissioner out of the loop. The extension district, said Mr. Hale, will become a taxing district like the schools.

Under Kansas law, said County Attorney Steve Hirsch, the extension council could bring in \$75,000 from Decatur County with a tax levy of a little over three mills. The county currently gives the program \$60,000.

In the beginning, said Mr. Jansonious, the board will have four people appointed from each county by the commissioners. After that, board members will be chosen through regular elections.

Are the members chosen based on a certain number from each commissioner district or just from each

county? asked Mr. Unger. Mr. Hale said he wasn't sure.

The 4-H program wouldn't be consolidated at this time, said Mr. Hale. That's not to say that years down the road, they might not be.

The only way that happens, said Mr. Onstead, is if the district board decides to consolidate the two. That is probably one of the most frequently asked questions when it comes to extension districts, he added.

Money is usually the other most frequently asked question, he said. The last few years Decatur County has given around \$60,000 a year for extension. K-State will contribute twice as much for the agents, he said, about \$36,000 a year rather than \$18,000. That doesn't mean the county has to have two agents, he said. It does mean the people of the county will pay for less of the service through county taxes.

He said four extension districts have been formed in northwest Kansas, and all but one decreased the tax levy from what the counties had.

The county would provide through taxes around \$46,754, said Mr. Hale.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy asked what would happen once the district is set up and the university can't pay the extra money. Would the county have to make that up?

There is a state law that says that won't happen, said Mr. Onstead. But, Mr. McEvoy pointed out, laws can be changed.

The county has run into a lot of instances where if the program is to continue, it needs to be paid for locally, said Mr. Brown. Is there a time frame on this? A year from July, said Mr. Onstead.

The money really isn't the reason to do this, said Mr. Hale. The main benefit is the extension district will be able to do a better job, with more expertise. But, noted Mr. McEvoy, the same expertise is accessible today through the university.

There will be more available here, said Mr. Onstead, plus a district would mean an increase in efficiency.

Will there be other counties added? asked Mr. Brown. That's up to the extension council, said Mr. Onstead.

The commissioners, said Mr. Hirsch, won't have any authority to decide if other counties can or can't join.

Isn't there a cap on property tax levies for special districts? asked Clerk Marilyn Horn. Not anymore, said Mr. Onstead. He said he believed a law passed recently repealed that lid, but didn't know when, adding that he would send the information to Mr. Hirsch.

Even if the commissioners agree to do this, it could be subject to a protest petition, said Mr. Unger, and then could force a vote by the people.

The commissioners made no decision, saying they would like to know what people in the county think about the idea.

Mr. McEvoy asked for a letter from the Norton County commissioners about why they decided to approve the plan.

From here, Mr. Brown advised the extension group, move forward, see what the public says, and come back to the commissioners.

"And if it's proven that this is what the people in the county really want," he said, "then I'm for it."

*Mayor says paper has a plan for cats

(Continued from Page 1A)

Minutes from the meeting read, "There was discussion about the complaints of feral cats in town and different solutions to taking care of your pets, getting rabies, and a plan to maybe license cats. This discussion will continue at a later time after everyone has had time to talk with others and think about it."

Mayor Stanley asked members Ray Ward and Jay Anderson if they had voted on a plan.

"I think it is *The Oberlin Herald's* plan," said Mayor Stanley, adding that council members were getting Ohate mail on the issue.

He said he did get a call from a state agency.

The person at animal welfare, said Mayor Stanley, said the city could trap and exterminate cats after holding the animals for so many days, but the best thing to do is to

not feed the animals. Then it will be like survival of the fittest, he said, but instead there is "the *Oberlin Herald's* plan."

That just stirs up a big mess, the mayor said.

"You certainly did it, Kimberly (Davis, managing editor of the paper)," he said, "You out did yourself."

Mayor Stanley told her that the council members could talk slower so she could understand or he could go over things for her to ensure accuracy.

Although he asked if there was any public comment, no one said a word.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Anderson said he wished he could take back some things he said at the last meeting and what was in the paper, referring to a comment about the cats "going to see Baby Jesus."

"It was kind of rash," he said.

Racing toward the finish line



AT THE HIGH SCHOOL TRACK, Andrew Wade crossed the finish line first during one of the races at the Oberlin Elementary School track and field "fun day" on Friday.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Emergency surveys mailed at end of April

At the end of April, the Decatur County Health, Emergency Management and Dispatch departments teamed up to send out 300 surveys to people 45 years and older to find out about any special needs in case of an emergency.

Health Administrator Marilyn

Gamblin said so far, she has received about 70 surveys back. The idea is to get some information from people who could have special needs like oxygen or those who are bedridden, in case there is a tornado or fire.

People under 45 didn't receive the

surveys, she said, but anyone in that age group who has a special need or is disabled should fill one out.

The surveys can be picked up or dropped off at the health department, county clerk's office or the extension office.



Chapter Eight - by Kay Hively

The rain stopped just as Scotty finished his library books. He opened the window by his bed. A light breeze passed through the opening. The night smelled fresh and clean. He could see the moon behind some thin clouds. Looking at the moon, Scotty thought about President Truman.

The books said President Truman had been a soldier and had led a group of men. But, as President, he was the Commander-in-Chief. That made him the leader of every American soldier and sailor.

When Mr. Truman became President, a war was raging. Thousands of soldiers had been killed, and many people had died where fighting took place. All this worried President Truman. He finally decided the only way to prevent more deaths was to defeat the enemy quickly. That meant using a new weapon - an atomic bomb.

Another big decision President Truman made was to end segregation in the military. Until this was done, black soldiers were not allowed to serve with white soldiers.

Ending segregation in the military was just part of Mr. Truman's plan to end segregation everywhere. In America, blacks were second-class citizens. They could sit only in the balcony at movie theaters. They had to ride in the back of buses and trains. They went to all-black schools, and were not allowed to play on professional sports teams.

But President Truman knew that black people could do anything that white people could. Since Mr. Truman believed that the buck stopped with the President, it was his job to make things right.

Scotty thought about his friend Jimmy, who was black. Jimmy could do anything. Sometimes he could do things better than anyone else - like hitting a baseball.

Again, Scotty looked out into the night. President Truman did many good things. Scotty was glad that he had been assigned to write about him.

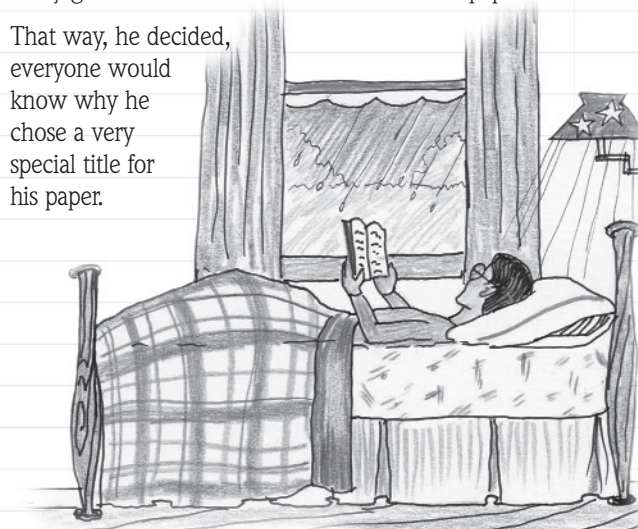
The next morning, Scotty gathered up all his books and filled his backpack. He was eager to get to school and to start writing his paper. He had decided what he would write about, and he had chosen a title for his research paper. After breakfast, Scotty put on his backpack. Funny, he thought, it didn't seem as heavy as it was when he brought it home on Friday.

Scotty opened the door to his mother's office to say good-bye.

Mrs. Brown asked if he was ready to write his paper. Scotty smiled, nodded his head and said he was going to call his research paper, "The President Who Looks Like Me."

As Scotty hurried down the alley toward school, he was happy. He couldn't wait to start writing his paper. And, using his mother's computer, he planned to include a picture of President Truman. In fact, Scotty thought the picture of President Truman when he was 12 years old would look really good on the cover sheet of his research paper.

That way, he decided, everyone would know why he chose a very special title for his paper.



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Cofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Truman photo by Harry Barth. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2007.

Business plans for clean up

Members of the Oberlin Business Alliance made plans last Wednesday to clean up downtown before Memorial Day weekend.

At a meeting that day, members suggested merchants clean up the sidewalks before Alumni and Memorial Day weekend. The group plans on having a work night Thursday, May 22. Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, said maybe they would ask the city to sweep the streets, too.

Rusty Addleman, owner of Addleman Drug Store, said they might want to ask for volunteers from the 180 House to help clean up.

Each business, said Mr. Vollertsen, will be in charge of planting flower in their own planters. Phyllis LaSalle, Raye's Grocery and Stanley Hardware all have flowers for sale.

Last year businesses purchased the flowers through Flowers by Lee, said Kimberly Davis, at The Oberlin Herald, then either the business people could plant them or the Girl Scouts did the job.

Some of the planters on the north end of the downtown block on Main Street have been moved in front of occupied store fronts from empty ones.

In other business, the members:

- Decided to have a burger and polish sausage feed from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the drive through south of the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center on Friday, May 23.

- Agreed to pay bills for \$265 to Jack Benton for the a cd changer in the Chamber office and fixing the speakers downtown, \$90 a one roaster, extension cord and trash can to Stanley Hardware and \$246 to Raye's for supplies for the fish fry in April.

- Heard that after the bills, the fish fry brought in \$226 for meat and buns.

- Approved sponsoring a trophy for the Decatur County Museum Car Show and Summerfest for \$20.

- Agreed to do fireworks again for the Fourth of July.

Things to Think About and Do

- Why do you think Scotty's backpack was lighter when he started back to school? What does "taking a load off your mind" mean?
- When black people couldn't play professional baseball, they had black baseball teams. On the internet, research the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City. Look at the uniforms worn by the players. If you could start a baseball team, what name would you use? Design a uniform for your "pretend" team.
- Find a picture of someone in the newspaper who is about the same age as Scotty. Using your imagination, create a story that has him or her growing up to be a famous person from your state.

Visit the Truman Presidential Museum & Library at www.trumanlibrary.org