

Oil leases keep office jumping

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Decatur County register of deeds office has worked 400 more documents so far this year, compared to this time last year, mostly because of oil leases being extended.

A lot of those were three-year leases, said Register Judy Gaumer. Those were signed for the first time in 2005, so the documents are now being renewed.

Probably about 70 to 75 percent of the documents done in the office on the first floor of the courthouse, said Mrs. Gaumer, are related to oil, and that has been true since early in 2005, when an oil boom in the county really took off.

With new technology, she said, exploration companies have new ways of being able to tell where the oil might be. There was oil activity in the county in the past, she said, but with the improved technology, it's increased.

Of course, the price of oil has gone to record highs, so drilling has become a good investment again and people are looking here for oil again.

Although the leases have to be filed in the register's office, said

Mrs. Gaumer, companies don't have to say how much the lease rate is per acre.

Just in October, she said, 41 lease extensions have been filed in the county.

Mrs. Gaumer said the deeds office doesn't have any information about how much oil has actually been produced.

She said she does have the new affidavits of production on file. They must be filed when a well goes into production. In 2003 and 2004, she said, there weren't any filed. In 2005, though, there were three, 2006 there were 10, in 2007 10, and so far in 2008 four.

The process starts with the oil company leasing drilling rights for the land from either the landowner or the owner of severed mineral rights.

A lot of those leases, she said, were done three years ago, when the oil companies really became interested in Decatur County.

Most of those original leases were for three years, she said. Many of those are now being extended for three years, although some are for two and some for five.

Not all leases, she added, are (See DEEDS on Page 5A)

Company busy drilling new oil wells

In the past five years, Murfin Oil Co. has drilled about 35 wells in Decatur County, although not all of them hit enough oil to become producing wells.

Exploration and drilling was up during those years, said Michael Pisciotte, land manager with the company out of Wichita, driven by the rising price of oil on the world market.

Of the roughly 35 wells, he said, only about half actually produced oil. State figures show that 58 wells have been drilled in Decatur County, he said, the majority of them in Prairie Dog Township. Those include the ones drilled by Murfin and by other companies as well.

Murfin's activity in Decatur County is pretty high, said Mr. Pisciotte. There has been a significant amount of exploration.

Some older fields, basically east and west of Oberlin along U.S. 36, have been around for a while. Then there are fairly recent discoveries, within the last year and a half, north of Selden.

Back in 2005, he said, Murfin became the operator on a lease originally owned by TA Investors. That was drilled and kind of reinvigorated the area, he said. From then on, said Mr. Pisciotte, some "pretty nice discoveries" have been made.

Original interest and the decision (See SEISMIC on Page 5A)

Polls open 12 hours for general election

Polls for the general election will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday, but a lot of people in Decatur County have voted already.

As of Monday, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn, 305 people had asked for advance ballots.

With two local races and a presidential battle, Mrs. Horn, who serves as the county election officer, said she hopes for at least 75 percent of the 2,020 registered voters will cast a ballot.

On the county level, races are for the register of deeds office

between Republican Kari Ketterl and Democrat Shanna Long. The current register, Judy Gaumer, announced earlier that she would retire after this year.

There is also a race between Republican Gene Gallentine and Democrat Lee "Doc" Franklin for the commissioner seat in District 3. Commissioner Doyle Brown of Jennings also is retiring.

Democrat Bob Streyve of Norcat and Republican John Faber of Brewster, the incumbent, are both (See VOTERS on Page 5A)

Clocks fall backward as Daylight Saving ends

With the first snowfall of the season over and winter just around the corner, Daylight Saving Time will come to an end this weekend.

The clocks will turn back an hour Sunday, which means the evenings will seem even longer throughout the winter as the sun

seems to set earlier.

Clocks need to be turned back at 2 a.m. that morning, but most of us will either set the clocks back Saturday night before going to bed, or when we get up. Just don't forget, or you'll miss that extra hour of sleep and be early for everything Sunday.



MEMBERS OF THE Lady Red Devils held hands as they waited for the last play of the game that sent them to the state tournament. The players and coaches include Kiah Blau (above, left to right), Mary Olson, Coaches Sherri

Ruf and Melissa Dreher, Ashley Horton, Brandi Diederich and Jessica Fredrickson. Adrienne Pauls (below) jumped up to block the ball.

— Photos by Sarah Fredrickson

Lady Red Devils head to state tourney

The Decatur Community High volleyball team is going to state for the third time in four years.

This is Coach Sherri Ruf's first trip to state as head coach of the Lady Red Devils and just her second year in that position. Previously, she was assistant coach to Pat Dorshorst for seven years.

Two years ago in 2006, the Oberlin girls, then in Class 3A, defeated the Lakin Broncos and Phillipsburg Panthers to win substate and a chance at a trip to Salina. That year, Oberlin beat the Fontenac Raiders but lost to Osage City and Wellsville and were eliminated.

In 2005, Coach Dorshorst also took her team to state in Class 3A, but the team was quickly eliminated that year also.

Oberlin has also taken teams to the state tournament in 1986, 1987, 1990, 1991 and 2001.

This year the girls will be playing in a different classification, 2A, and a different place, Gross Memorial Coliseum at Fort Hays State University.

Oberlin will meet the St. Marys Bears at 9:30 a.m. Friday for their match. Opening ceremonies for the tournament start at 7:45 a.m.

Coach Ruf said her girls were ready to play.

"They're all excited and they're all good girls," she said. "They (the administration) called off school on Friday so people

School's out this Friday

Oberlin Schools will be closed Friday as the Decatur Community High School volleyball team and one of the cross country runners head to state competition.

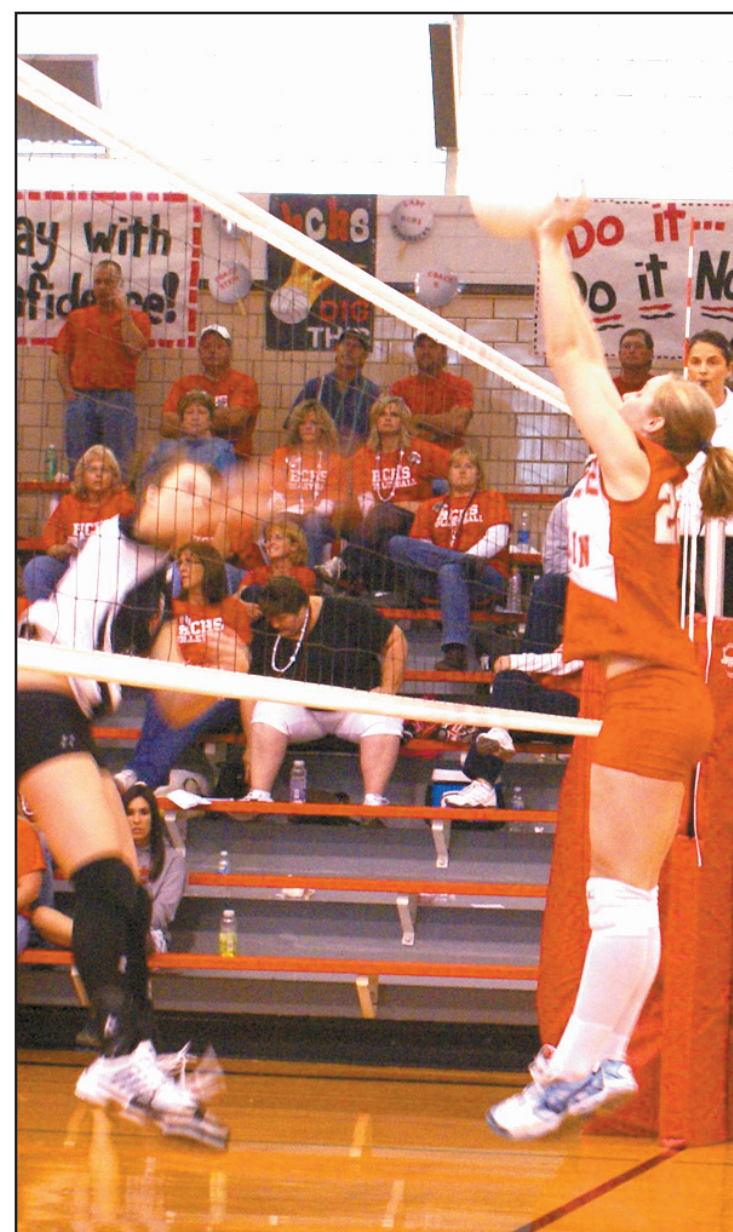
Superintendent Pat Cullen said the primary reason they canceled school is that it's a big deal in the community for the volleyball girls to qualify for the state tournament.

Looking at the number of staff who want to attend the tournament, he said, the district doesn't have that many substitute teachers. Dr. Cullen said they also took into account the number of students who would be playing that day.

could attend."

But before the girls got their chance to go to state they had to defeat so old enemies — St. Francis, Atwood and Hill City — at the substate tournament on Saturday.

The Oberlin girls entered Class 2A substate play after winning the Northwest Kansas League title with victories the week before over St. Francis, Colby, Goodland, Quinter and Hoxie to take their record to 26-8.



On Saturday the Oberlin girls extended their record to 29-8 after downing St. Francis, Atwood and Hill City each in two-set matches.

Despite their 25-19, 25-11, victory over St. Francis, Coach Ruf said she didn't feel her team was at its best in the match. (See GIRLS on Page 9A)

Banquet set for Friday for Pheasants Forever

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever will hold its annual banquet Friday, the evening before pheasant season opens.

The doors to The Gateway will open at 5 p.m. with a social hour, followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. Rick Doeden, banquet chair, said the meal will include steak with all the trimmings.

No reservation is needed for the dinner, he said, just show up. Tickets, \$25 each, will be sold at the door.

Membership to Pheasants Forever will be available at the banquet as well. Membership costs \$30, said Mr. Doeden, and that includes a quarterly magazine. Kids, he said, get a free membership with the chapter picking up the cost.

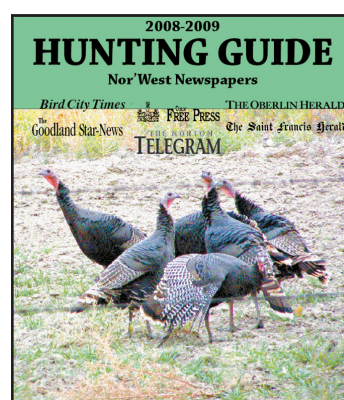
Besides the dinner, the evening will feature raffles, plus live and silent auctions. Items, which have been donated or sponsored by businesses, can be seen in those businesses all week. Mr. Doeden said some of the auction items include framed prints, baskets, decorating (See DINNER on Page 5A)

Fall Hunting Guide inside today's paper

Nor'West Newspapers' annual fall hunting section is included in today's copy of *The Oberlin Herald*.

The section includes articles on the outlook for hunting pheasants, deer, turkey and waterfowl in this area, where to buy licenses and the rules and regulations for the year.

It also has maps showing where hunters can go for walk-in access to state-leased land in northwest Kansas.



*Dinner to raise money

(Continued from Page 1A)
items, guns and hats.
Another item will be a new kind of three-dimensional art released by Wild Wings, he said.

People will have the chance to win or buy at least nine guns. A 16-gun fireproof safe will also be raffled off, said Mr. Doeden, with only 100 tickets sold at \$20 each. The purchaser will receive a knife as a ticket, each one numbered 1 to 100.

Since the banquet will be on Halloween, he said, there will be candy on the table for the kids.

A lot of the money raised at the banquet goes to the chapter's habitat project at Sappa Park, east of town, said Mr. Doeden. Some is designated for youth projects. The group would like to do a youth shoot, he said, but it hasn't been planned yet.

Over the year, members of the chapter have planted a free pumpkin patch, sweet corn, switch grass, Christmas trees and fruit trees in the old lake bottom at the park. Some of the projects were flooded out, but others worked well.

The members have also helped maintain the walking trails at the park, which they lease from the City of Oberlin.

Pheasant season starts on Saturday.

Doctor agrees to letter

The Doctor Procurement Committee has a signed letter of intent from an Olathe doctor to come to Oberlin, although no contract has been signed.

The committee has been searching for a doctor since Dr. Richard May left in December 2007. Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden said Dr. Obed Saint Louis has signed the letter, which basically says that he's interested in coming here to work. The contract has not yet been worked out, but has been sent to his lawyer for review.

Dr. St. Louis, said Mrs. Doeden, is familiar with rural medicine, as he did a stint with the University of Kansas Medical Center's rural practice program.

"We are still interviewing an additional practitioner, too," she said.

Council to discuss wetlands

The Oberlin City Council will hear an engineer's report on a planned wetlands for Sappa Park during the second meeting of the month Thursday at The Gateway.

Rick Pauls, with the Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever, which leases the park, received the report about a possible wetlands in the former lake bottom from an engineer. Those plans will be discussed at the meeting.

Mayor Joe Stanley said he thought the council would talk more about a possible wind-generator zoning ordinance which was tabled at the meeting at the beginning of the month, as well as about a proposal for DNA testing for dogs.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. downstairs in The Gateway. It is open to the public.



IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE in the Decatur County courthouse, Connie Olson used a voting machine to cast an early ballot on Friday for the general election Tuesday. Advance voting ends Monday.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

*Voters cast ballots Tuesday

seeking the 120th District seat in the state House of Representatives. This is the fifth time they have faced each other, and Mr. Faber has won each time so far.

Others running for county office include:
• Incumbent Ralph Unger, a Republican, who is running for re-election as commissioner in District 2.

• Incumbent Ken Badsy, Republican, for sheriff.

• Incumbent Steve Hirsch, Republican, for county attorney.

• Incumbent Jean Hale, Republican, for treasurer.

• Incumbent John Bremer, Republican, district magistrate judge.

• Colleen Geihlsler, Republican, for county clerk. Mrs. Horn announced that she would be retiring at the end of the term; Mrs. Geihlsler is her deputy.

Voters will also choose township treasurers and trustees during the election. Mrs. Horn said four

people have come in to let her know they plan to run a write-in campaign for those spots.

Ron Diederich, a Democrat, is running as a write-in candidate for the Beaver Township treasurer spot. Incumbent Brendan Moore, Republican, will be on the ballot for the spot after winning the coin toss after a tied vote in the primary election.

Ron McDougal, a Republican, will run as a write-in candidate for the Center Township treasurer's spot. George Ruzicka, a Democrat, is on the ballot.

In Dresden Township, Linda Schroer, a Republican, will run for treasurer while Jill Reichert, also a Republican, will run for trustee.

No other write-in candidates have told Mrs. Horn of their intention to run.

Polling places include The Gateway in Oberlin, the United Methodist Church in Dresden, the Sunflower Senior Center in Jennings and the city office in the former school in Norcatour.

Career fair planned at The Gateway

Area students are invited to a "Careers for Tomorrow" job fair at The Gateway in Oberlin on Wednesday, Nov. 19.

The fair, sponsored by the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., will run from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. that day. The Gateway is at the intersection of U.S. 36 and U.S. 83.

The job fair is open to the public, with students from northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska invited to come learn about careers.

Area vendors include businesses and industry and service providers. Colleges and others from the area sending recruiters including McCook Community College,

Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, the Kansas National Guard, the Northwest Kansas Technical College out of Goodland and more.

Registration for the vendors is \$10, which covers booth space.

For questions, call Connie Grafel, marketing director for the cor-

poration, at (785) 475-2901. Ms. Grafel is the contact for vendors at 1 Morgan Drive Oberlin, Kan. 67749, while Brenda Breth, Decatur Community High School counselor, is the contact for students at 475-2231.

The KansasWorks job service mobile bus will also be at the fair.

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*Seismic tests show oil in the county

(Continued from Page 1A)
whether to drill is based of geological information and other research that gives geologists an idea where the oil is, he said.

The southern part of the county was tested back in the late 1970s, early 1980s, Mr. Pisciotte said, and most was nonproductive. Since then, the technology has changed. Now a 3D seismic survey can be done. That's where seismographic waves come across the land to give a picture of what's below the surface. That's utilized to identify potential test locations.

Mr. Pisciotte said Murfin contracts with Paragon Geophysical out of Wichita for that work. As the oil market began to climb, he said, the incentive to find new reserves

increased. It's an economic gain.

He said he doesn't know what will happen in the future with oil. The price has been highly volatile, with a \$90 swing downward since July. Theoretically, the price will equalize somewhere, but if it drops too much and it costs more to lift the oil out of the ground than it can be sold for, the level of drilling and production will drop. No one knows what will happen, said Mr. Pisciotte.

Although Murfin drills the wells, and then takes what's produced to the tank battery, he said, a first purchaser then picks it up there. They haul it to either a refinery or to market. The first purchaser then makes payments to Murfin and to the royalty owners, he said.

*Deeds office busy filing oil records

(Continued from Page 1A)
extended. Some are dropped.

Mrs. Gaumer said she isn't sure where oil companies get the information on where the oil is, although there are companies that come in and do seismograph testing. Those companies sell the research to the exploration companies, she said.

The oil companies buy the information and come up with a likely place to drill. Before that is done, the companies find investors to help pay the cost of drilling a well. Just like with all investments, there is risk, said Mrs. Gaumer. Those investors basically get a part of the oil production, if there is any. If there is none,

they can lose all their money.

Landowners who are on the lease, she said, normally get one-eighth of the gross proceeds from a well each year.

When a company hits oil, she said, they file an affidavit of production in the her office. That affidavit gives the legal description of where the well is located.

Some of the companies that have worked in the county include Murfin Drilling Inc. from Wichita, and Great Plains Energy Inc. out of Wahoo, Neb.. Both are drilling contractors. J. Fred Hambright Inc. and McCoy Petroleum Corp. have been active as leasing agents.

County looks at projects

The Decatur County commissioners talked with the road and bridge supervisor about projects around the county.

At the meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 14, Supervisor Tim Stallman said he will be working on getting the storage tank for unleaded gasoline at the county shop east of town off the ground. The other fuel tanks are on pedestals, he said.

The state is starting a spill control plan, he said, so he will work on that too.

Mr. Stallman asked the commissioners to ratify purchase of a load of off-road diesel, which costs around \$20,000. The commissioners said OK. He said he had talked with Commissioner Doyle Brown before

making the purchase.

The crew is still mowing and blading the roads, he said.

Mr. Stallman asked for the commissioners to allow him to purchase two 10-gallon barrels of antifreeze, which they did. He said last time he looked it was close to \$7 a gallon.

In other business, the commissioners:

• Selected Commissioner Unger as the voting delegate to the Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative for Counties meeting with County Clerk Marilyn Horn as the alternate.

• Appointed Mrs. Horn as the Kansas Counties Association Multi-Lined Pool voting delegate with Mr. Unger as the alternate.

student of the week



Name: Andrew Richards
Parents: Barry and Patti Richards

Grade: 12
Age: 18

We've nominated this student because: He has led our Cross Country team the last 2 years and medaled 6th at McCook.

We believe he has now earned a medal in all regular season meets he has run in during his career. He won the Northwest Kansas League Cross Country Championship. He works hard and leads by his example and he is a

wonderful young man.

Student Comment: I think that this is an honor to be selected Student of the Week and I am really glad that I have been chosen. It's really cool.

Activities involved in at school: I am involved in cross country and Weight Club and I will be involved in wrestling and track.

My choice of movies, books, and games: My choice of movie would be 'Dumb and Dumber'.

After I leave Decatur Community High School I intend to ...: I think that I will go run cross country at Colby Community College.

And 10 years from now, I think I'll be ...: living in a small town, hopefully as the Fish and Game Warden and also probably married.

Favorite Quote: "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift." — Prefontaine

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this election year
by exercising your right
to vote on
Tuesday, November 4

I would appreciate your continued support in the General Election,
Tuesday, November 4.

Ralph Ostmeyer

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