



MEMORIAL CHRISTMAS WREATHS (above) marked the graves of all veterans buried at the Jennings and Big Timber cemeteries for the "Wreaths Across America" program on Saturday. Drake and Brecken Rowh (below) put a wreath by the grave of their great-grandfather, George

Votapka, a World War II veteran, while (far below, from left) Jennings Legionnaires Bob Tacha, Eugene Mrstik and Martin LaRue prepared wreaths to be placed at the memorials at both cemeteries.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Service honors veterans

By MARY LOU OLSON

A quiet and solemn atmosphere filled the air at the Jennings and Big Timber cemeteries on Saturday morning as members of the Jennings American Legion honored veterans of all wars with a Christmas memorial service.

The ceremony was the culmination of a year-long dream for Bob and Neoma Tacha of Jennings, who spearheaded the effort to buy wreaths for graves of all veterans at both cemeteries.

The Tachas said they first learned of the "Arlington Wreath Project" through a story a year ago in the "American Profile" magazine. It set out one man's vision to honor America's heroes. Mrs. Tacha's brother, Lt. Col. Willis R. Kusy, was buried in Arlington Cemetery in 2004, she said, so the story caught her attention.

Ty Yahne and Larry Mizer raised the American flag at the Jennings ceremony, and Eugene Mrstik and Bob Tacha placed a large Christmas wreath at the Jennings Veterans Memorial. Legion Adjutant Lawrence Jennings gave the salute at the wreath, after which "Taps" was played by Wilfred Wagoner.

A similar service followed at the Big Timber Cemetery with Mr. Yahne and Mr. Mizer raising the flag and Mr. Mrstik and Daryl Hartzog placing the wreath at the flag pole. Jennings American Legion Commander Kenneth Krizek gave the salute at the wreath, followed by "Taps."

The creator of the annual holiday tribute is Morrill Worcester, owner of the Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine. In 1992, his company was building a second factory and he knew from past experience that area artisans would stop by the construction site to offer their homemade wreaths for sale. He thought he might need the extra wreaths, so he told his carpenters to buy any of the holiday ornaments they brought by.



"I had forgotten all about it until Monday, Dec. 10, when a carpenter asked me what I wanted him to do with all the wreaths.

"I didn't need them," he said. "It was too late for the season, but they were nice fresh wreaths, so I thought of Arlington."

To get things started, he called a friend who donated a tractor-trailer to haul the wreaths and then got the OK from officials at the cemetery to adorn the graves. With the help of a dozen friends, Mr. Worcester saw that 5,000 wreaths were laid on the headstones six hours on December 1992.

Since then, hundreds of volunteers have arrived each year to help with the wreath-laying, and each one takes time to read the name on the stone. Some kneel and pray, some talk, and many weep, Mr. Worcester says.

Mr. Worcester said he received many e-mails from people across the nation asking him to do something at national cemeteries in their area that a year later his organization brought by.

(See WREATHS on Page 5A)



Cold puts deep freeze on school

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

k.davis@nwkans.com

A pile of colorful, handmade afghans and blankets sit in the corner on the top step in the vocal music room at Decatur Community High.

A big red space heater stands in the middle of the top step, running on high to help heat the room.

With temperatures outside dropping to the single digits Monday and the wind chill a minus 11, those blankets and heaters were put to good use, as the older front section of the building doesn't always have heat.

Garrett's Plumbing of Norton has been replacing a steam condensation line for the heating system since October. That means since then the older section of the school hasn't had 24-hour heat yet this winter. The heater had been turned on every night, but since the sump pump broke and the new one isn't in yet, someone has to be at the school when it runs.

Students, teachers and staff have had to wear coats, sweatshirts and in some cases wrap up in blankets to stay warm.

"It was 45 degrees in out classroom this morning," said Mary Jo Lohofener, who plays the piano a

few hours a day at the high school.

She said they haven't had heat all year, and although the classes have worked around it, it's crazy.

On Monday, the students went to the cafeteria, in the new back part of the building, to practice, because the music room was too cold. Mrs. Lohofener said they have space heaters, but they blew a fuse on Monday.

Around 2 p.m., the heat in the vocal room got up to 55 degrees as the temperatures outside reached a toasty 9 degrees.

Superintendent Pat Cullen said the heating system was turned on Monday afternoon and things were warming up nicely. It's cold outside, he said, and it takes a while to heat up the building. Even when the system is running all the time, he said, it takes some time to warm up.

When the plumbers started the job, said Principal Charlie Haag, it wasn't as cold outside. Then as the project got underway, one thing led to another. Parts had to be ordered. When the plumbers aren't working on the system, he added, it can be turned on.

Just recently, a sump pump in the basement broke. That meant the (See STUDENTS on Page 5A)

School board must vote again on resignation

The Oberlin School Board will revisit acceptance of the superintendent's resignation during a special meeting at 7 p.m. tonight at the district office.

A tie vote during the meeting last Monday, although taken as an approval of the resignation, apparently wasn't adequate.

Dr. Pat Cullen turned in his letter of resignation at the meeting. Members Dan Grafel, Dan Nedland and Monte Moore voted in favor of accepting it, while Chris Bailey, Barb Olson and board President Dwayne Jackson abstained. Member Jerry Chambers wasn't at the meeting.

At the time, Dr. Cullen said that was enough to approve of the resignation. However, under state law, four votes are needed to accept the resignation. The matter is the first item on the agenda for tonight.

State law says "Any member who abstains from voting shall be counted as having voted against the motion or resolution. If a member announces a conflict of interest with regard to the issue, the member may

leave the meeting until the voting on the issue is concluded and the member who abstains from voting thereby shall not be counted as having voted."

None of the three members who abstained from voting said it was because of a conflict of interest.

The same statute also says that, "A majority of full membership of the board shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting any business of the school district and the vote of a majority of the full membership of the board shall be required for the passage of any motion or resolution."

With seven members, four votes are needed to form a quorum and to approve any motion.

Mr. Jackson said it was ignorance on his part, adding he wasn't aware that abstaining would count as a "no" vote. He said he thought it was a 3-0 vote, but it wasn't. There had to be four votes, he said, which they will get tonight.

The board tabled any decision on administrator salaries and contract renewals until tonight's meeting.

Annual food drive still lots of cans short of 2,000-item goal

With just two weeks left, Stanley Hardware's annual food drive needs 1,326 more items to reach the goal of 2,000 cans and boxes for the Decatur County Food Pantry.

The drive started just after Thanksgiving and will end after New Year's Day.

The goal each year is for 2,000 items, which are then taken to the food bank in the basement of the United Church.

People can donate nonperishable food items, cleaning supplies, paper products and toiletries for the drive. The donated items will be added to the pile in the window at the store.

On Monday afternoon, there were 674 items in the stack.

Oberlin residents can leave food on their porch between 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sunday and members of Teens for Christ will pick it up during their annual Porch Light Food Drive.

Leave your porch light on if you want the teens to pick up food.

Those who live outside the city can drop food off at the Teens for Christ building at 118 S. Rodehaver between 6 and 7:30 p.m. that night.

If a donation is missed, said Pastor Doug Mason, call him at home at 475-2599.

Everything the kids collect will be given to the community drive, he said.

Christmas drawing set for Saturday

Shoppers have just a couple of days left to collect numbered tickets for a chance to win \$1,200 in scrip money Saturday in the Oberlin merchant's big "Christmas on Us" giveaway.

For the past four weeks, sponsoring businesses have given out tickets to shoppers, and people have been able to get one a week at the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce office or *The Oberlin Herald* without making a purchase.

Shoppers get one ticket for ev-

ery \$10 spent at sponsoring businesses, not to exceed 250 in one purchase.

Friday is the last day to collect tickets. At 5 p.m., all of the tickets will be picked up for the drawing at 11 a.m. Saturday in Centennial Park.

Over the weeks, nine people have collected \$50 "instant winner" prizes by matching one of their ticket numbers to a number in one of the sponsoring businesses' ads.

Last week, four numbers were listed in the ads and one man matched a

ticket number and won \$50 in scrip money. Ed Dean brought in ticket No. 039090, which he got at Gottl Home Planning Center. He said he plans to spend his winnings at the same business. Mr. Dean also brought in an instant winner ticket the previous week.

With only nine of the instant prizes collected, there's still one left to give away this week by matching a ticket number to the ad. If it isn't claimed, then the money will be given away at the gazebo Saturday. The instant prize will be

given away first. That drawing will be followed by the drawing for the first prize for \$300 and then the grand prize of \$1,200.

All of the money will be given in scrip good only at sponsoring businesses: LandMark Inn, Addleman Drug Store, Southwest Implement, Stellar Sales, Home Planning, Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Ward Drug, Raye's, Stanley Hardware, Rocking R, Ultimate Fertilizer, R&M Service Center, Prairie Petals, Amprie, the Bank, A&W Drive In and (See SHOPPER on Page 5A)

City answers suit over water treatment plant

A lawyer for the City of Oberlin, in his answer to a lawsuit filed by an Oberlin woman who fought with the City Council over whether she could have chickens in town, denies some of her claims that the new waste water treatment plant has ruined property nearby.

Allen Glendenning, an attorney hired by the city's insurance company, demanded a trial by jury. His

answer to the lawsuit, filed at the beginning of November, denies some of the allegations and admits some.

The lawsuit states that the lagoon system is running in violation of the "published regulatory standards by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment," that it is running in violation of the "minimum standards of design for water pollution

control facilities," that it's a public or private nuisance, etc. The claims are denied in the answer by the attorney representing the city.

The suit seeks either a cash settlement of more than \$75,000 or, in the alternative, a promise from the city to close down the new \$1.9 million plant.

Julie Cunningham filed the suit against the city at the beginning of

November. She had filed a notice of intent in the case last year. According to the paperwork filed with the clerk of the district court, Ms. Cunningham owns a home and property to the south of the sewer lagoons.

The suit claims that Ms. Cunningham purchased the land, including the home where she grew (See WOMAN on Page 5A)

*Students bundle up inside school

(Continued from Page 1A) system couldn't be left on at night because the basement could fill up with water. At the school board meeting last week, the members approved buying a new pump.

Mr. Haag said they are using a smaller one, but in order for the heating system to be left on, someone has to be in the building. Kenny Black, district maintenance supervisor, started the system at 4 a.m. Monday, said Mr. Haag, and will probably do that all week.

The heating system then can run in the morning to get things heated up, he said, but then in order for the plumbers to work on the system, it has to be turned off.

Students have been moved around to different rooms, he said, and things have worked out. The heating system that's being worked on serves eight classrooms, the auditorium, the old gym and the vocal wing, said Mr. Haag. The rest of the high school is on a different system, which is working fine.

Dr. Cullen said he hasn't really received many complaints about the heat, although he has gotten

some comments about it being cold.

"I think most people are understanding," he said.

The condensation line is being replaced now, said Dr. Cullen. It had to be done because of wear and tear over the last 80 plus years. When it failed last year, it caused at least \$30,000 in damage.

The district has a new boiler for the system, he said, but that probably won't be put in until the spring or summer when the heat isn't needed unless it has to be done before that, he added.

Everyone knows the high school is in the middle of a major renovation, said Dr. Cullen. It's about 90 percent complete. The project will probably take another week or two to be finished, he said, so probably by the end of Christmas break, the heat will be running as usual.

According to the National Weather Service in Goodland, the forecast for the rest of the week is for more cold, with a high on Tuesday of 21 and wind chill at minus 19. The high should be 23 today, up to 32 on Thursday and 29 on Friday.

*Woman sues city over sewer plant

(Continued from Page 1A) up, with plans to restore the farm and retire there.

"That the lagoon has been designed, constructed and is now functioning in violation of published regulatory standards by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment," the suit claims. "(It) is located and is functioning in violation of minimum standards of design for water pollution control facilities adopted and published by the (department)."

The suit goes on to say that Ms. Cunningham is entitled to damages from the city, in excess of \$75,000,

or "in the alternative for injunctive relief preventing the defendant from operating and maintaining said waste water treatment lagoon."

In 2007, Ms. Cunningham filed a claim against the city for \$250,000 alleging the new plant reduced the value of her land.

The claim was filed around the same time the council told Ms. Cunningham that she couldn't keep her four chickens at her home on East Maple because of zoning restrictions against farm livestock.

Ms. Cunningham hired Daniel C. Walter of Norton to represent her.

*Shopper will win more than \$1,000

(Continued from Page 1A) D&M Sinclair Service, the Dresser, the NWKansonline.com business directory and *The Herald*.

Employees of sponsoring businesses are not eligible to get tickets at their workplace. No one can get more than 250 tickets in any one transaction.

Employees of the newspaper and their immediate family aren't eligible for any prize.

Winners must be present and have the ticket with them at the time of the drawing. All winners agree to be photographed and interviewed by the newspaper.

All of the prizes are paid in scrip that can be used at the sponsoring businesses only. No change will be given.

If the weather is bad, the drawing will be moved indoors to the Golden Age Center.

Group to help people with medical expenses

A new group plans to raise money to help people in Decatur County pay medical expenses.

The 11-member group, hospital administrator Lynn Doeden; Regina Stanley, at The Bank; Linda Hunt, at The Bank; Janice O'Hare, at Hansen Mueller; Leanna Bryan at the health department; Chris Dempewolf, Norcatour city clerk; Carla Depperschmidt, grade school secretary; Jean Hale, county treasurer; Tiffanie Farr, at Farm Service Agency and insurance agent Abby Hissong and her daughter Alexis.

The group calls itself the Decatur County Helping Hands for Health Care. Members meet at 5:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of the month at the Business Enhancement Entrepreneurial Center. The meeting is

open to anyone who wants to join, said Mrs. Dempewolf.

The idea is to help people not only with medical bills, but also with money for fuel and motel stays for patients and family members who must travel to another town.

The group, said Mrs. Dempewolf, is a nonprofit organization. People will apply for help, she said, but the effort isn't limited to helping those with any certain medical expense.

The group plans to start raising money next year and wants to start helping people then also, she said.

Anyone who wants to give a donation can send or give a check payable to Decatur County Helping Hands to Mrs. Stanley at The Bank.



PLACING A MEMORIAL WREATH at the grave of Korean War veteran Bennie Krizek at the Big Timber Cemetery (above) were his daughter, Mary McEvoy, and his grandson, Clint Krizek. Brynna Brown, great-great-

granddaughter of Joseph Kusy, a World War I veteran, and two step-great-great-grandchildren, Hanna and Eaton Brown, join others in the memorial wreath project.

*Wreaths decorate graves of veterans

(Continued from Page 1A) tion unveiled "Wreaths Across America." With the help from the Civil Air Patrol and other groups, ceremonies were held at 230 state and national cemeteries and veterans' monuments across the country.

Mrs. Tacha said her brother enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1939. He spent 25 years in the service and retired in 1965 from the U.S. Air Force as a helicopter pilot. He was stationed in the U.S., Panama and England, where he was a pilot for the Air Rescue Squadron. His wife Mildred is also buried at Arlington, and his father, Joseph Kusy, a World War I veteran, is buried in the Jennings Cemetery....

"The project for Jennings and Big Timber was sponsored by the Jennings American Legion and Auxiliary, and the Jennings Czech Museum," Mrs. Tacha said. "We started buying the wreaths a year ago."

Many of the wreaths were placed at the cemeteries on Friday by volunteers.

Among descendants of veterans who placed wreaths at Jennings were Brynna, Hanna and Eathon Brown, great-great-grandchildren of Joseph Kusy, World War I; Trent and Jayden Fenner, and Candace, Rayna, Sidney and Abe Taylor, great-grandchildren of William Carter, World War II; and Drake and Brecken Rowh, great-grandchildren of George Votapka,

World War II. At Big Timber, Mary McEvoy and Clint Krizek, daughter and grandson of Bennie Krizek, a Korean War veteran, placed a wreath on his grave.

Cost of the wreaths, which will be stored and used again each year, was \$700. Anyone who would like to help may send donations to Bob Tacha, Box 99, Jennings, Kan., 67643, or give contributions to the Czech Museum or the Jennings American Legion and Auxiliary.

Veterans honored include:
JENNINGS CEMETERY
Civil War: O.E. Munson, Uri Welton, John P. Green, Martin Keever, John Squires, Milton Platt, Daniel Simpson, James E. Smith, M.H. Brock, Charles Koehn, E.J. Taylor, Edward Howell, John Comer, Jesse Elgin, William Carper, Solomon Reese, W.M. Harris, William Kemper.

World War I: Charles Pine, Leo Bendon, E. Heatherington, Joseph Kusy, Charles Davis, H.O. Hardesty, Glen Rogers, Jasper Denney, Montra G. Jones, Frank W. Tacha, Howard Comfort, Russell Conley, Dwight Funk, Tully S.M. Wolf, S.C. Henry, Arthur Munson, Melvin Stephens, Elmer Dawson, Rollin Underwood, Jesse Huff, Allyn H. Beers, Anton M. Bouts, Roy Bainter, Carl Leiber.

World War II: Marvin Randall, Melvin Foster, Frances Hellner, George Votapka, Otto Haresnape, Franklin Dawley, Harry Allen, Richard Tacha, William Heatherington, Carl Haresnape, John Randall, Gerald Tacha, John Ma-



zaneck, Dale Tacha, James Carlton, Norman Bainter, Loren Beers, Neil Keenan, Paul Tacha, Boyd Keenan, Bernard Reiley, Archie Harman, Mason Wolf Sr., Robert Burns.
Joe Kinser, Ray Stackhouse, Cloyce Randall, Ray Smith, Carl Votapka, Robert White, Gerald Miller, Harlan L. Wolf, William C. Brock, F. Bremencamp, Jack Huff, Lewis Oswald, Jack R. Tacha, Leo Tacha, Kenneth Muirhead, Francis McKenna, Lee Taylor, Merold Carter, Jack Foster, Willard Carter, Galen Bennett, Elmo In Bailey, Dallas Kolsky.
Foreign Service: Chris Nicholson.
Korean War: Robert Stephens, George Tacha Jr., Dennis Winget, William D. Mrstik, Lester Shimek.
Vietnam War: Royal Burns, Jay L. Jones.
Peace Time: Larry L. Tacha.
BIG TIMBER CEMETERY

Foreign Service: Joseph Cilek, John Fiala Sr., Albert Janousek, Matt Kaspar Sr., Fred Wentz, James Janousek, Joseph Urban, Frank Pachner, Gustave Steffen, Joseph Tucek, Joseph Vacura.
Civil War: Bartholomew Henry.
Spanish American War: Anthony Kolsky.
World War I: Henry W. Heilman, William Krizek, Anthony Kaspar, Joseph Petracek.
World War II: Edward Cilek, Vollie Kathka, Raymond Matousek, Alfred W. Heilman, Anton Vacura, Carl Kasper, Bernard Ehrlich, Frederick A. Flaska, Lumir Jesse Skubal, Raymond Pavlicek, Lys Carey, Myron Skubal, John Petracek, Stanley Mazanek, Donald Shaw.
Vietnam: Wayne Buchanan.
Korea: Raymond Kaspar, Norman Petracek, Harwood Chandler, Bennie Krizek, Charles Votapka.
Peace Time: Elmer Petracek.

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