



# Happy New Year!



# THE OBERLIN HERALD

75¢ (tax included; 54¢ delivered at home)

14 Pages, 2 Sections

Wednesday, December 31, 2008

130th Year, Number 53



**ON THEIR JUNGLE GYM** Sunday afternoon, the Isbell youngsters (above) include Christopher, who sat on top of the monkey bars; Judith, who played on a swing; Jesse, upside down; Cori, standing; and Calista, near the slide.

Jeanne Isbell (below) stopped to take a quick picture with her kids at Washington's Dulles International Airport when Judith and Jesse arrived from Ethiopia.

## Woman forms family

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
k.davis@nwkansas.com

The kids — all five of them — smiled, laughed and played on a jungle gym in the front yard of their home.

The weather was warm, and no one wore a coat as they ran around and around.

The five kids — Cori and Judith, 7; Calista and Jesse, 6; and Christopher, 5 — may not look exactly alike, but are brothers and sisters now. They will grow up in the same home and have been joined as a family through adoption.

Jeanne Isbell has taken in all five children, from both China and Ethiopia, over the last seven years. In 2001, Ms. Isbell, a retired Denver police officer, started the paperwork and adopted Cori, then in 2004 Calista and in 2006 Christopher, all from China.

In November, the family traveled to Washington to meet her new son and daughter and the kids' brother and sister, Jesse and Judith, who were escorted to the States from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

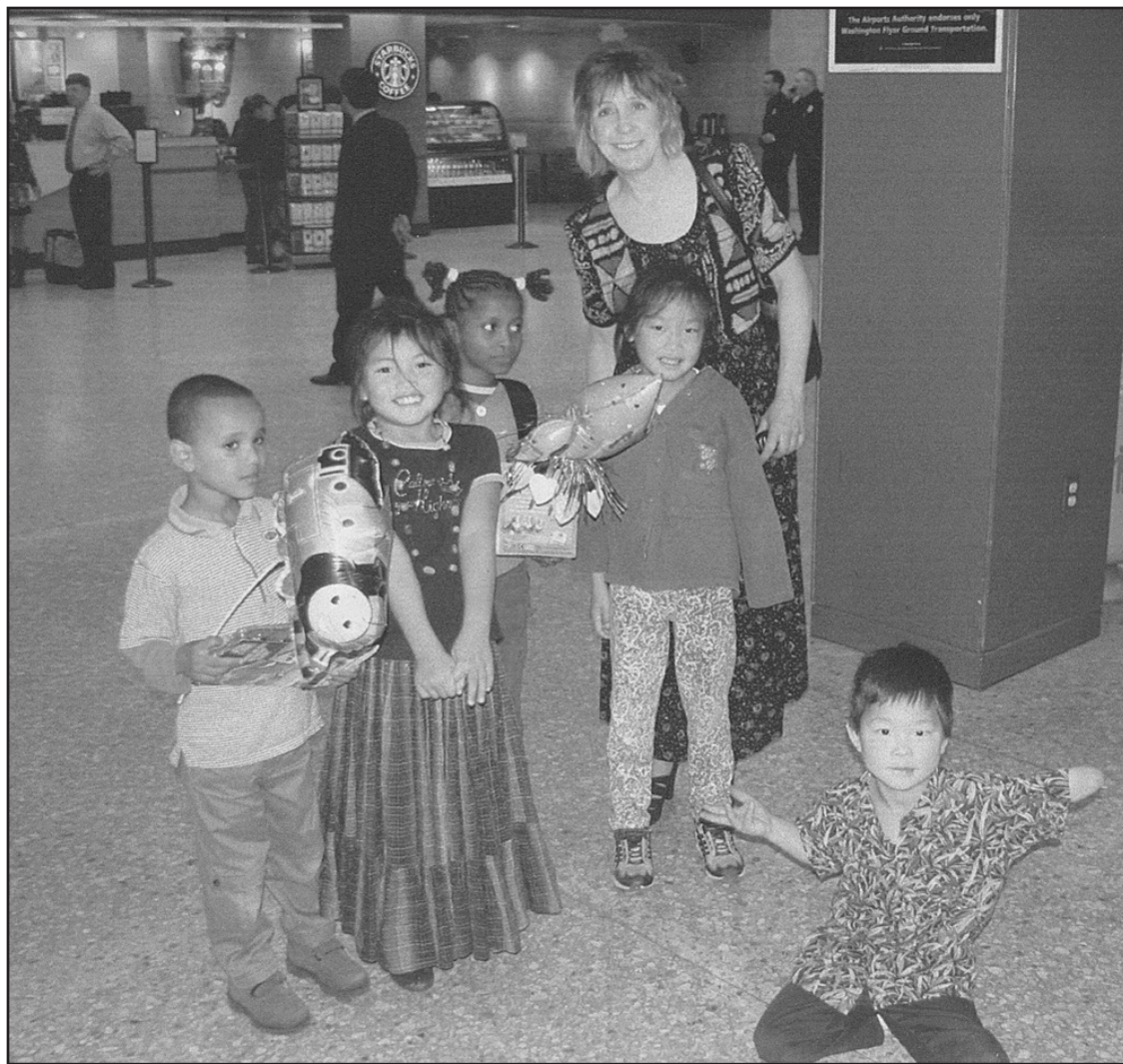
Although all of the kids are now a family, none of them are biological brothers and sisters.

Ms. Isbell said after adopting Christopher, she wanted to adopt another boy so that he would have a brother. Around the same time, China closed its doors to single parents and new restrictions were placed on couples wanting to adopt.

She said she wasn't allowed to adopt from some other countries because she turned 55 in August and was considered too old. She said her agency, International Adoption Guides, told her that she met the criteria for an adoption from Ethiopia because there aren't as many rules there. The agency also said it would be affordable.

The paperwork, she said, wasn't as horrendous as some, either, she said.

Ms. Isbell said the person from the agency told her she could



adopt more than one child if she was interested. She told her about Judith, whose Ethiopian name is Yodit. Both she and Jesse, or Ermios, were being raised by biological mothers who weren't able to provide for them. Their fathers are both dead and the kids were living in extreme poverty, she said.

Neither Judith nor Jesse had birth certificates, she said, so the courts in Ethiopia determined their age and gave them birth dates.

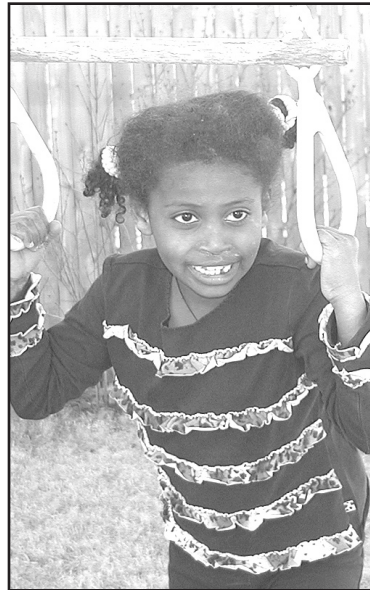
Judith's birthday, said Ms. Isbell, is May 1, 2001, and Jesse's is March 22, 2002.

Although she traveled to China when she adopted Cori, Calista and Christopher, the family only went to Washington to meet and bring home Judith and Jesse.

Ms. Isbell said it would have cost well over \$20,000 for her and kids and a helper to travel to Ethiopia.

The kids were escorted by two Ethiopian men from the adoption agency. The escort program cost \$6,500, far less than flying the family to Africa.

On Nov. 7, the family flew into Dulles, southwest of Washington. They stayed in a hotel that night and then met the kids at 7:30 a.m. the

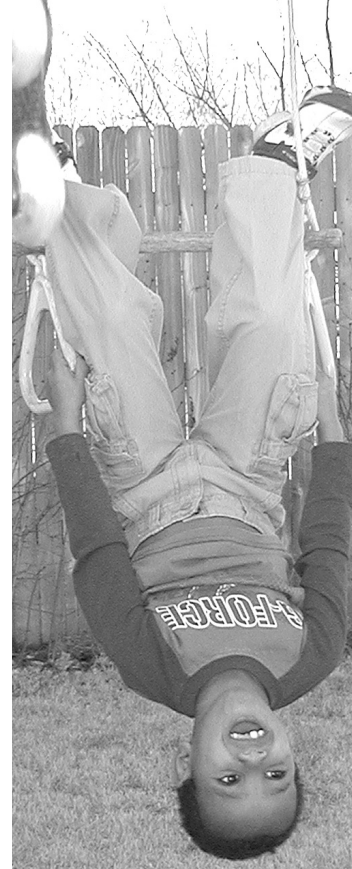


**OUTSIDE**, Judith (above) and Jesse (right) smiled as they played with their brother and sisters.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes

next day at the airport. The whole family flew back to Denver the next day and drove home.

The adoption was actually final on Aug. 4, before the kids flew



from Ethiopia to the states, Ms. Isbell said.

(See **ADOPTED** on Page 8A)

## Merchants say season was good

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**  
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

While the national and international economy sagged and large retailers complained of a bad year and looked at layoffs, Oberlin merchants were mostly happy with the Christmas season.

Store owners and managers in downtown Oberlin and on U.S. 36 reported a good, although mostly not great, shopping season.

Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, said that, while he hadn't gone over all his holiday figures, he thought the year was about the same as last year, which was good but not great.

"It wasn't a blockbuster," he said, "but, it was better than anticipated with all the preseason forecasts."

Across the street at the LandMark Inn and Oberlin Mercantile, owner Gary Anderson said that the restaurant had fewer parties than last year but that he thinks that's a change that's been coming on for several years. Hotel business was good, he said, partially because Oberlin has fewer rooms for rent than it used to. On the retail side, sales were up, he

said, especially in his new line of costume jewelry. What didn't sell, he added, were Christmas-related items like Santas and snowmen.

Mr. Anderson said that the only problem with the shopping season was the number of snowy days. Bad weather, not the national economy, was the biggest problem for retailers in Oberlin.

"Snowy days were the biggest factor," he said.

That sentiment was echoed by Joe Stanley, owner of Stanley Hardware, who sells both presents and Christmas decorations.

While overall the shopping season was reasonably good, he said, and Christmas items went well, outdoor lights did not just fly off the shelves.

"Lights are weather related," he said. "We sold fewer, not because of the national economy, but because the weather was bad every weekend."

Over at Raye's Grocery, manager Mory Zdrov said that the store had about the same amount of customers spending an average amount of (See **SHOPPERS** on Page 8A)

## Town, county grow, change over course of busy election year

In 2008, Oberlin businesses opened and closed, new leaders were hired and many things changed in Decatur County.

Each week, *The Oberlin Herald* reported those changes in and around town. Here is a look back at some of the highlights of the year.

### In January:

- The specialty clinic at the Decatur County Hospital opened, including a waiting room with check-in desk, a stress-test room with a bed and treadmill, a procedure room with a bed, a restroom, a storage area, two exam rooms with tables, storage areas and two offices. When the clinic opened, doctors specializing in urology, cardiology, oncology and ophthalmology traveled here to see patients.

- Larry Ganje retired as administrator of the Oberlin Medical Clinic and Barb Whitney took the helm.

- The doctor procurement committee started looking for a new physician after Dr. Richard May left in December.

- Water from the city's new waste water treatment center south of town started flowing down the creek towards Sappa Park for the first time.

- Three white-tail deer taken during hunting season along the Sappa Creek in central Decatur County

tested positive for chronic wasting disease, a brain ailment similar to "mad cow disease." Officials from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks scheduled a meeting to discuss the possibility of taking more deer to test.

### In February:

- The county sent letters out with the new Enhanced 911 addresses to rural homes and businesses to help improve emergency services. Calls coming in on cell phones to dispatch now are pinpointed using the new computer system.

- The Oberlin School Board approved the superintendent's plan to look into an alternative school at the former youth ranch. Plans were changed later to put an alternative classroom in the high school.

- The Oberlin City Council voted against borrowing \$4 million to build a water treatment plant. Members Rob McFee, Rhonda May and Marcia Lohofener rejected the idea of borrowing money while Ray Ward and Jay Anderson voted in favor.

- Members of the Oberlin School Board started interviewing candidates to take over the seat vacated by member Delayne May, who moved to Lawrence. Vote ends in a 3-3 tie between candidates Doug (See **YEAR** on Page 8A)

## Annual food drive ends after reaching its goal

Today's the last day for the annual food drive at Stanley Hardware.

On Monday, the sign in the hardware store showed 2,398 items, including non-perishable food, cleaning supplies and toiletries, well past the target.

The goal each year is to bring in 2,000 items, which are then donated to the Decatur County Food Pantry after the new year. Store owner Joe Stanley said

the Teens for Christ group pushed the food drive over the goal with their porch light pick-up on Sunday, Dec. 21.

Then people brought in another 400 plus items.

Everything will go to the food pantry, said Mr. Stanley, probably Tuesday afternoon.

Mr. Stanley said he plans to call a youth group to help move the food that day, if they can get it boxed up by then.



# \*Adopted kids join brother, sisters in U.S.

(Continued from Page 1A)  
It's been fun to watch Judith and Jesse, said Ms. Isbell. They didn't know how to get paper towels out of the dispenser in the restrooms and laughed about the hand dryers. They didn't know how to put a quarter in the slot on the machines at a pizza place.

Both kids speak Amharic, but can say their ABC's in English and count to 10. Both are attending Oberlin Elementary School, with Jesse in kindergarten and Judith in first grade.

The kids are learning, especially Judith, who is picking up more and more English. They still talk Amharic at home to each other.

Ms. Isbell said when she first started thinking about adopting from Ethiopia, she considered how accepting Oberlin is of kids from other countries. She said she talked to Keith and Roma Grafel, who used to live here and had adopted. Ms. Isbell said she feels comfortable bringing black children into the community and everyone has been very accepting of her kids.

"Thanks for being such wonder-

ful people," she said.

Ms. Isbell said there were times during the process that she was stressed. She didn't have the money to adopt again, but she found grants and applied for them. When it came time to pay the \$6,500 to bring her kids home, she didn't have it so she called a group called A Child Waits and they said she qualified for a grant. Ms. Isbell applied and received it.

Throughout the process she cashed in a life insurance policy and used her savings and tax refunds to make the adoption possible.

People have asked her why she adopted. Why not? she said. Her house is big enough, she said, she's a stay-at-home mom and her heart yearns for more children.

"It also helps to be a little crazy," she said with a laugh. "People who adopt have to do it by faith. Don't let the money intimidate you. Listen to your heart and desire, and the money will come."

Ms. Isbell also has a foreign exchange student, Linquan Wang, 17, from China, living with the family this year.



**THE THREE WISE MEN** presented gifts to the child Jesus and his parents during a living nativity pageant put on by the Lund Covenant Church in Brad and Elaine Marcuson's barn on Christmas Eve. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

## Animals, people attend pageant in barn

By CYNTHIA HAYNES  
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Almost 100 people, five head of cattle, three cats and a donkey crowded into a barn for a live nativity production on Christmas Eve.

Spectators sat on bales of hay. The cattle kept to their corner of the barn but the cats were everywhere. Angels appeared in the hay loft and atop large piles of hay. Shepherds kept watch by a fire of twinkling red lights. And the donkey played his part in the age-old

Christmas story.

The play was narrated by Doug Mason, pastor of the Lund Covenant Church, with pre-recorded music.

The Christmas Eve pageant was put together in the barn of the Brad and Elaine Marcuson farm, south of Oberlin on U.S. 83. Mrs. Marcuson, Norma Carman and Jo Mason coordinated the event while Mr. Marcuson took care of the lighting.

Playing roles were Amy Carman, Mary;

Kendal Carman, Joseph; Gideon Carman, baby Jesus; Sarah Marcuson, Jessica Fredrickson, Sara Kyte and Kanisha and Patience Carman, angels; Isaac and Jon Broeckelman, Caleb Koerperich, Colton Berg and Cory Shaw, shepherds; Chase and Cody Berg and Kiezer Carman, wise men; Andrew Richards, Duane Carman and John Simonsson, innkeepers; and Jaxen Alstrom, the archangel Gabriel. The donkey was provided by Brandon and Laura Bryan.

# \*Year was busy, exciting one for Decatur County, Oberlin

(Continued from Page 1A)  
Brown, manager of the Frenchman Valley Co-op in McCook, and Jerry Chambers, who serves in the Army. Mr. Chambers won on a coin toss.

**In March:**

• The state promised the city \$1 million for a new runway project at the airport.

• An area couple, Brent Jennings and Rhonda Workman, got married in the old Bohemian Hall, which was moved to the Decatur County Museum in 2000. It was the first wedding in the building since it was moved.

**In April:**

• Five people joined forces to start the Oberlin Mavericks Corp. to raise money for charitable organizations in the county by holding poker tournaments.

• Board members with Sunflower Cinema said they need more people to attend movies or make donations to help pay back taxes and bills for the theater.

• Council members voted to drill a well at Sappa Park near the shelter house for campers. Signs were posted to warn people that the water is not for drinking.

• The city received a \$475,000 grant to pay for an environmental assessment needed for the airport expansion. City officials and a volunteer committee had plans to build a 7,000-foot runway. The city also received \$100,000 for an automated weather observation system from the state that was supposed to be installed before June.

• Parents started to feel a shortage of day care in Oberlin. Some had to quit their jobs to stay home with the kids.

• The City Council started discussing what to do with stray cats in the city. Some of the ideas kicked around included trapping cats,

## \* Shoppers help town

(Continued from Page 1A)  
money as in years past.

"Everyone was spending about normal for the time of year," he said.

Not all merchants thought the year had been just OK. Over at R&M Service Center, owner Robert Groneweg said that the Christmas shopping season had been great for him.

"It was excellent here," he said. "I sold a lot of (Treager) grills and a lot of high-efficiency front loading washers and dryers."

"Most of them were for gifts."

He estimated that about three-fourths of the grills he sold were for presents.

"I was more than pleased," he said.

Out on U.S. 36 at Dales Fish 'N' Fun, co-owner Bob Woolsey said he wasn't sure how the Christmas season had gone yet, but that the year as a whole had been good. The store sells wholesale and retail sporting goods across a wide area.

"We're very, very thankful," he said. "We've had a good year all along. I'm not disappointed at all."

requiring tags and even poisoning them, but nothing was decided and the issue was dropped.

• Decatur Co-op reported bumper crops in 2007, meaning over \$1 million more in profit than the previous year. A good chunk of the money was to be returned to the members. The profit was \$1,115,725.

**In May:**

• A new recreation project, including a new senior center, movie theater and bowling alley, drew 53 pledges for \$234,600 for a state tax credit program.

• The City Council heard that an unnamed developer might want to build a new motel in Oberlin and might ask for industrial revenue bonds or a break on property taxes.

• A tornado hit a farm, a power line, homes and farm buildings in the county, with the worst damage north of town near the feed lot. Nine tornadoes were reported in the county, with sirens blowing many times.

**In June:**

• The council approved \$12,025 for an engineer to draw up plans for a wetlands at Sappa Park. The yes vote met with a round of applause from park supporters.

• Globes on the lights downtown were destroyed by a hail storm, with 30 of the 53 broken. Many roofs in town were ruined by the storm.

• The council talked with developer Dave Winfield of Nebraska about building a 21-room motel, but made no decision.

• The Decatur County Amusement Authority said it needed money to help keep the carnival rides going for the county fair in August. The group said it needed around \$21,000 to help keep the rides in shape.

**In July:**

• The county's property valuation increased by \$5 million over 2007 due to new oil wells in Prairie Dog and Bassettville townships. Total valuation in Bassettville Township was \$5,598,441 and in Prairie Dog at \$3,260,422.

• The state approved a tax credit for the new recreation center, awarding \$125,000 through the Kansas Department of Commerce in community service tax credits, which will cover \$178,000 in actual donations.

• A rural Dresden couple, Fred and Henrietta Bremer, left their estate, worth about \$2 million, to the hospital and the city, for The Gateway.

**In August:**

• The Decatur County commissioners gave the OK on a \$300,000 general obligation bond issue to finance part of the new senior center, bowling alley and movie theater.

• A Norcat woman, Lois Eckhart, left \$223,121 in certificates

of deposit to six organizations, including the Decatur County Health Foundation, Decatur County Museum, Good Samaritan Center, Oberlin United Methodist Church, Norcat Cemetery and the city of Norcat.

• The new county Enhanced 911 address system wasn't yet final. Although calls were coming in on the system, the maps weren't finished. The commissioners held onto a \$22,000 check to R&S Digital until the county got new road maps.

• The Decatur Co-op purchased an elevator in Norcat, the former Norcat Grain facility.

• The city crew started replacing globes on the lights downtown. Thirty-two of the globes were broken in a May hail storm.

**In September:**

• Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas announced budget cuts, meaning restructuring some of the services in the 18-county region, including Decatur County.

• City Administrator Gary Shike turned in his resignation after 18 years with the city. Council members started searching for a replacement, using the Kansas League of Municipalities to help and advise with the process.

**In October:**

• The Decatur County Last Indian Raid Museum marked 50 years of

service during the Mini Sapa Celebration.

• Enrollment at the Oberlin School District dropped by 26 students, a decline of about 6 percent.

• A retired Army colonel and a current National Guard member announced they are working on a plan to turn the former youth ranch into a state multi-agency training center for northwest Kansas.

• The Oberlin City Council started studying an ordinance to regulate wind turbines inside the city limits, but no decision was made.

• The Lady Red Devils volleyball teams headed to the state tournament for the third time in the past four years.

**In November:**

• Two bombs, drugs and guns were found in an Oberlin home by police executing a search warrant in a drug case. Three men were arrested on drug charges after the city police and other officers went through two houses.

• Supporters celebrated at City Council meeting after members voted to approve wetlands at Sappa Park with a price tag of \$78,585, the city already had paid \$12,025.

• The council tabled an ordinance on wind turbines and voted to repeal an ordinance banning pit bulls and dogs that have the appearance of the breed in town.

• Oberlin school Superintendent

Pat Cullen came under fire after the school board received letters suggesting it ask the public what they want in a superintendent.

• Land owned by Fred and Henrietta Bremer sold for more than \$1.4 million, with half of the money going to the hospital and half to the city for The Gateway.

• The new speciality clinic at the hospital received an award from the Kansas Hospital Association.

• Members of the City Council voted to move forward with a \$4.4 million loan for a water treatment plant, after holding off for much of the year.

**In December:**

• County commissioners voted to join with Norton County in an extension district, which will be run by a board with power to levy its own property tax.

• Members of the school board voted 3-3 to accept the resignation of Superintendent Pat Cullen during their regular meeting at the beginning of the month. At a later special meeting, the members voted unanimously to accept the resignation. During the meeting, the members interviewed the grade school principal for the job.

• A contract with Dr. Obed Saint Louis was signed by the doctor procurement committee. He will start at the Oberlin Clinic beginning at the first of the year.



## Cover Your Acres Winter Conference

### January 20 and 21, 2009 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 in Exhibit Hall					
	University Sessions			Industry Sessions		
8:45 - 9:33	Weed Strategies in Grain Sorghum <sup>1,2</sup>	Wheat Residue Management <sup>1</sup>	Crop Insurance <sup>1</sup>	Grain Marketing Strategies	Advances in Breeding Technology <sup>1,3</sup>	Sponsor
9:40 - 10:28	Carbon Credit Trading	Eye in the Sky, Yield Forecast from Satellite Images? <sup>2,1</sup>	Glyphosate Resistance <sup>1,2</sup>	Plant Nutrition	Advances in Breeding Technology <sup>1,3</sup>	
10:35 - 11:23	Glyphosate Resistance <sup>1,2</sup>	Limited Irrigation and No-till <sup>1</sup>	Pros & Cons of UAN with Herbicides for Wheat <sup>1,2</sup>	Oilseed Production Storage, and Marketing	Advances in Breeding Technology <sup>1,3</sup>	
11:30 - 12:30	Farmer Panel: Things to do before you start No-till <sup>1</sup>	Sprayer Setup: Improve Efficacy & Reduce Drift <sup>1,2</sup>	Noon Meal	Improvements in Corn Traits	Noon Meal	
12:40 - 1:40	Planter, Drill Closing & Press Wheel Options <sup>1</sup>	What do you want from KSU agronomy? (help us, help you)		Mechanics of Strip-till		
1:50 - 2:38	Managing Rust on Wheat <sup>1</sup>	Crop Insurance <sup>1</sup>	Carbon Credit Trading	The State of Fertilizer in 2009	Advances in Breeding Technology <sup>1,3</sup>	Sponsor
2:45 - 3:33	Farmer Panel: Summer Crop Plant Population	Grain Marketing Analysis & Strategies	Weed Strategies in Grain Sorghum <sup>1,2</sup>	Sunflower Production	Advances in Breeding Technology <sup>1,3</sup>	
3:40 - 4:28	The Value of Nitrogen Testing <sup>1</sup>	Wheat Residue Management	Limited Irrigation and No-till <sup>1</sup>	National Sorghum Check-off Update	Advances in Breeding Technology <sup>1,3</sup>	
4:35 - 5:23	Pros and Cons of UAN with Herbicides for Wheat <sup>1,2</sup>	Planter, Drill Closing and Press Wheel Options <sup>1</sup>	Eye in the Sky: Yield Forecasts from Satellite Images? <sup>2,1</sup>	Goss' Wilt in Corn	Advances in Breeding Technology <sup>1,3</sup>	
5:30 - 7:30	Industry Sponsored Bull Session (refreshments and heavy hors d'oeuvres provided) in the Exhibit Hall and will be held on both nights of the conference.					

CEU credits for CCAs have been applied for. <sup>1,2</sup>CEU credits for 1A for Commercial Pesticide Applicators have been approved. <sup>3</sup>Advances in Breeding Technology is sponsored by Monsanto and will be in the mobile lab in parking lot.

**Diamond Sponsors: Hoxie Implement, Hoxie Implement, Lang Diesel, National Sunflower Association**

**McCook National Bank, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Producers Cooperative Oil Mill, Monsanto, & Farm Credit of Western Kansas**

**Registration** - The conference will be held for two days with the same program each day. **Early registration must be postmarked by January 13. Please register early.** \$22 Tues 20 Wed 21 Early Registration - Attend all the sessions for one day. Please mark which day. \$40 Early Registration to attend both days which will have the same program each day. \$45 Registration per day after January 13 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: \_\_\_\_\_