



IN THE VOCAL ROOM, Barbara Dehlinger (above) pointed to a word for Kaitlynn Fisher while Charlotte Meints (below) listened to Nolen Pierce read. The women are part of the Loving Ears program at the grade school, where adults come in and listen to students read out loud.
— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Seniors lending their ears

A few men and over 20 women are helping the students at Oberlin Elementary School with their reading in a new project called Loving Ears.

Ears stands for Eagerly Assisting Reading Students, said Principal Duane Dorshorst. The project started two weeks ago.

He said adults, mainly retirees and a few others, come in Monday through Thursday at a designated time and listen to students read. He said the adults received information on how they should help the children.

A pamphlet suggests having the student sound out the word with exaggerated sounds so they know what it is, to look at words in "chunks" so they can sound them out and to also look at the prefixes and suffixes.

The pamphlet says that students in second grade and younger still might point at the words with their finger as they track what they are reading and he said that is OK. Often after the second grade, students learn to track with their eyes or use a bookmark.

Mr. Dorshorst said the program gives kids practice reading out loud to someone. The adult can then help them if they run into a word that gives them trouble.

Students in all grades are taking part in Loving Ears.



Dispatcher to write up new radio, recorder specs

The Decatur County commissioners asked the chief dispatcher last Tuesday to write up a specification list for a new recorder and radio for the dispatch office on the fourth floor of the courthouse.

The commissioners were reluctant, however, to commit county money to buy nearly \$100,000 worth of equipment, even with the grant paying about half the cost.

Jeanne Pachner said there's a grant available through the governor's office for the two pieces of equipment, and both need to be replaced.

The money in the 2009 grant program is safe, said Ms. Pachner. Grants are being planned for 2010 and 2011, but the money hasn't been promised and the request can't be for those years, said Ms. Pachner.

The recorder in dispatch, she said, is 10 years old. It's really at the point

that it has to be replaced.

The radio also has to be replaced, said Ms. Pachner. It's old enough that they can't get parts for it anymore.

Are these pieces a want or a need? asked Commissioner Gene Gallentine. Both are a need, said Commissioner Stan McEvoy, a former county dispatcher. The recorder records all of the calls and conversations that come into dispatch.

Mr. Gallentine asked if the items were in the budget for this year.

Ms. Pachner said she has one price for a new radio at \$74,934 and for the recorder at \$17,839. She said the county is supposed to get a grant for \$48,783, with \$33,429 going to the radio and \$9,523 for the recorder.

After County Attorney Steve Hirsch looked at the grant agreement, he suggested Ms. Pachner find

out if the county needs to get competitive bids and also if they can use the money for a lease-purchase.

Ms. Pachner called a representative with the governor's grant program, who said the county needs to get competitive bids. She said if the county wanted to do a lease, a request would have to be submitted and approved.

It's more expensive to do a lease purchase, noted Mr. Hirsch.

Mr. Gallentine asked which piece of equipment is most urgent.

Ms. Pachner said she wasn't

sure. The recorder has been put off before.

Having worked in the dispatch office, Mr. McEvoy said he thought both the recorder and the radio are important.

Ms. Pachner said that maybe they should wait until budget time and put the money in for the radio and try to get the grant again.

Grants have been extended before, said Mr. Hirsch.

Ms. Pachner said she would write up a specification list to send out and get some competitive bids

County holding \$22,600 check for company

The Decatur County commissioners decided last Tuesday to wait until all members are present to make a decision about sending a \$22,600 check being held for R&S Digital for work on the county's road naming and addressing project.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman said he feels like the database on the new road names and addresses that the firm was hired to do is complete. The database has been forwarded to the U.S. Postal Service, he said.

The "centerline" maps are done and any problems have been fixed.

The software in the dispatch office needs to be updated with the new centerlines, but that's something that needs to be done by AT&T, he said, adding that Chief Dispatcher Jeanne Pachner has a call in to the phone company.

The original contract with R&S has been fulfilled and the county can release the check, he said.

Printed maps with the new road names and addresses will cost more, he added, and weren't included in the original contract.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy said he thought they should wait until all three commissioners are able to discuss the issue to vote. Commissioner Ralph Unger wasn't at the meeting.

Mr. Stallman said he had a farmer come in and ask about a place where the county has a small culvert and a landowner wants a larger culvert put in so cattle can cross the road. In the past with bridges used for cattle to cross under a road, he said that when one's been pulled out, the county put a culvert in.

This time, the land is changing hands, said Mr. Stallman, and they want a large culvert. He said there is no procedure for this.

What if the farmer buys the materials and the county does the work? asked Mr. McEvoy, since the county will have to maintain the culvert after it's put in.

The culvert would be on a township road that the county maintains, Mr. Stallman said. There's a small culvert now and a five-to-six-foot culvert would be going in.

How many hours of labor would it take to put the culvert in? asked Commissioner Gene Gallentine. Probably two days, said Mr. Stallman.

What's the county's policy been in the past? asked County Attorney Steve Hirsch.

This hasn't been done before, said Mr. Stallman. Old wood structures have been taken out and a culvert put in. Once a smaller one is replaced for a larger one, he said, this will be the county's new procedure.

This could sure open a can of

County roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Found out that the former promoter for the Decatur Speedway had made an oral commitment to pay \$1,615 of the \$3,615 the fair board says he owes. Story to come.

- Decided to wait until all of the commissioners are present before sending a check to mapping contractor R&S Digital for work on the road addressing project. Story at left.

- Asked the chief dispatcher to write up a specification list for a new recorder and radio for the dispatch office on the fourth floor of the courthouse. Story below.

worms, said Mr. Gallentine. Maybe the farmer should pay part of the cost.

With no existing policy, the commissioners tabled the decision.

The commissioners talked with Mike Rowe Jr. from Husker Steel, a Nebraska firm which has built bridges for the county, about prices. Mr. Rowe said it was probably a good thing the county didn't do a bridge last year, as prices were up, and now they are back to normal.

On bridges, when using money from the federal program, which is filtered through the state, Mr. Stallman said the county pays 100 percent of the engineering cost and then 20 percent of the construction cost.

The county has tried to do a bridge project a year, said Mr. Stallman, but when it seemed the state wouldn't have any money, the 2009 bridge was pushed back to 2010.

Mr. Stallman said they are trying to move that bridge back to 2009. It is by Kent Ashley's place, about 22 miles southwest of Oberlin.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Heard Mr. Gallentine commend Mr. Stallman's crew on the work done recently on the road on the Norton-Decatur County line between Norcat and Clayton.

- Heard that samples sent in from the old Sunflower Cinema came back negative for asbestos. Mr. Stallman said the investigator took 14 samples from the roof, counter tops, things on the floor and items on the walls. He said he thinks the cost is \$20 to \$25 a sample and then \$250 for the man coming to Oberlin from Kearney, Neb.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

The burning of vegetation, limbs and other organic material will be permitted

(no rubber tires):

Sunday, March 15

through

Monday, May 4

provided adequate safety measures are taken, and being mindful of wind conditions.



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City Mayor
Joe Stanley

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