



SANTACLASUS listened as a girl (above) whispered in his ear. Kids talked with Santa at the new Golden Age Center on Friday night after the Parade of Lights on Main Street. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



FRIDAY NIGHT during the Parade of Lights, Deputy County Clerk Nora Urban (above) rode on the Decatur County float with trees and the American flag.

Youngsters enjoy visit with Santa Claus himself

Children greeted the man in red with cheers and clapping Friday as he arrived on a Decatur County fire truck during the annual Parade of Lights on Main Street.

Santa Claus then met with kids of all ages in the west room of the new Golden Age Center. In the past, the kids conferred with Santa on the first floor of the courthouse.

Following the parade, parents, grandparents and kids walked as fast as they could north up Main Street to the center. Some waited in a weaving line inside the building, while others wound around the outside toward Main as Santa finished the parade.

Santa walked into the center with helper Carol Morford and members of the Oberlin Lions Club.

Youngsters took turns sitting on Santa's lap telling him what they wanted him to leave under their tree and in their stockings. Lots of the kids whispered in Santa's ear, while others spoke loud enough for those still in line to hear. Some hugged the big guy while others cried for their parents while sitting on Santa's knee.

The youngsters asked for umbrellas with princesses on them, train sets, sleds, video games and game consoles, dolls and more.

After each one talked with the big guy, Santa

and Ms. Morford handed each child a bag full of goodies provided by the Lions.

Kids who want to see Santa again or who didn't have a chance to see him this week can put in their Christmas wishes when he returns to Oberlin on Saturday, Dec. 19, following the Oberlin Business Alliance soup lunch at the center.

Santa has set up his mail box in front of Stanley Hardware on Main Street for anyone who might want to write a letter. These usually wind up in *The Oberlin Herald's* annual "Letters to Santa" section to be published later this month.

Shoppers flock to holiday opening

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Oberlin shoppers were out and about Friday and Saturday, looking for the best deals for Christmas presents.

Merchants, as usual, had mixed reports about the holiday opening weekend, although most said it went pretty good.

Gary Anderson, owner of the

LandMark Inn and Oberlin Mercantile, said traffic in the store was steady on Friday, with lots of people from out of town. Friday, he said, was better than the Friday after Thanksgiving last year.

The store, said Mr. Anderson, wasn't as busy on Saturday though, and a little down from last year.

(See SHOPS on Page 12A)

Annual Christmas floats sparkle with many lights

The weather was warm and adults and kids lined Main Street waiting for the floats decorated in tiny sparkling lights.

There were 16 or 17 entries for the Oberlin Business Alliance's annual Parade of Lights, said Gary

Walter, with The Bank, who has helped organize the parade since it started.

There were floats with tiny sparkling lights, some with decorations that were blown up and

(See PARADE on Page 12A)

An Editorial:

Vote No!

Oberlin voters should have their ballots by now for a special election on whether the city should be allowed to spend money on land and paving for a new runway at the airport.

Supporters have worked long and hard to get state and federal support for a new runway, needed to handle larger planes and business jets. They have a financial plan they feel will pay for the improvements with little tax money. Here are some facts:

- State and federal agencies have said they will pay \$11,815,000 of the projected \$12,560,000 cost for a 5,500-foot runway. Of that, city taxpayers would be asked to repay loans for \$250,000 as an average cost of about \$17 per family per year. The city plans to put \$45,000 from cash reserves and the county \$50,000.

This means the taxpayers would shoulder less than 2 percent of the cost

- Civic leaders have gathered support from the state Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration, and state and federal legislators. All went to bat for Oberlin.

How will they feel about helping Oberlin next time if we now abandon this project?

- The project calls for a 5,500-foot runway to supplement the current 3,792-foot runway, which must be shortened to about 3,500 feet. A final length of 7,000 feet would be possible, but only if heavy traffic develops years from now. It would be foolish not to plan for future expansion.

But no one envisions a 7,000-foot runway in Oberlin's near future. That's only a dream, and not part of the current project. The ordinance would prohibit any spending on a 5,500-foot runway for 10 years.

Folks, this is a good deal for our town. A community either grows, or it dies, and growth requires investment in the future. When someone else pays most of the bill, so much the better.

Are you ready to watch Oberlin die?

Vote NO on this turkey of an ordinance. — Steve Haynes

Clerk's office sending out airport ballots

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Ballots are in the mail for an election to determine whether an ordinance prohibiting the city from spending money on a new, longer runway at the municipal airport for 10 years will become part of Oberlin's city code.

Ballots were to go out Tuesday and are due back to the Decatur County clerk's office by noon Tuesday, Dec. 15.

Registered voters will determine whether or not to approve an ordinance to prohibit the city from spending any money on a new, longer runway or land acquisition at the municipal airport. The ordinance says that the city would be prohibited from spending, "any federal, state, city or private funds for the purpose of studying, planning or building a new runway or acquiring additional land at the Oberlin Airport. Nothing herein shall prohibit the maintenance and improvements required by the Federal Aviation Administration to maintain the existing runway."

The ballot could be confusing. A yes vote will approve the ordinance, while a no vote is to reject it and allow the runway project to proceed.

While opponents say the ordinance will hamstring the city and prevent needed development, backers says the project will never pay for itself, even with massive amounts of federal and state money. Taxpayers, they claim, will be stuck with the bills.

Oberlin is known as a progressive community, said Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Economic Development Corp., and this isn't the time "to start ducking our heads."

The airport is important to the future of Oberlin, she said.

If the ordinance passes, said Ms. Grafel, the city will lose support from the Federal Aviation Administration, the Kansas Department of Transportation and state and federal legislators who have worked hard to get money for the airport project.

Runway opponents are bringing up supposed plans for a 7,000-foot runway, she said. That's just a goal, Ms. Grafel said; it isn't what the group is trying to build right now. The other side should quit hammering on that and talk about the real issue, she said, including the need for progress.

When the state's aviation chief says he thinks pilots will stop at this airport for fuel, said Ms. Grafel, she believes him. When a FedEx employee who lives in Oberlin says he will help market the airport, she said, she believes him.

The corporation has been getting the word out about the airport and how it hopes people will vote on the ordinance. The group has run ads, put out table tents at restaurants, done some calling and plans to mail out some information, too, she said.

The corporation planned to hold an informational meeting at 7 p.m. (See BALLOTS on Page 5A)

Food pile growing in store's front window

The annual food drive at Stanley Hardware got into gear this week, with 382 items already in the front window.

For the past nine years, owner Joe Stanley has sponsored an annual food drive.

He said it started as the stores Y2K promotion. Traditionally, the drive starts the Friday after Thanksgiving and ends after New Year's Day.

This year, people started to bring items in early, so last Monday the store already had 185 nonperishable items in its south window.

As of Monday morning, the number of items had increased by almost 200, with 382 items

in the window.

The goal is 2,000 items for the Decatur County Food Pantry, which will be delivered after the New Year with the help of students from Decatur Community High School.

To reach the goal, the store needs 1,618 more items over the next four weeks.

The pantry accepts nonperishable food items, plus cleaning supplies and toiletries.

Anyone who wants to donate to the drive can bring the items to Stanley Hardware on the west side of Main Street.

Three spot numbers, take home \$50 each

Three people claimed the first \$50 instant-winner prizes in the Oberlin merchants' annual "Christmas on Us" contest this week.

There were eight ticket numbers in last week's ads in *The Oberlin Herald*, but only three of the ticket holders claimed their prizes by 5 p.m. Friday.

The winners were:
• Bill Flynn with ticket No. 989064 which he got at Stanley Hardware. Mr. Flynn used part of the scrip money to renew a subscription to *The Oberlin Herald*.

• Jeanette Miller brought in ticket No. 266548, which she got from *The Herald*. Mrs. Miller said she's never won anything from "Christmas on Us" before, but thought she would use the money for Christmas presents.

Sandy Zeigler brought in ticket No. 539018, which she got from Raye's Grocery.



J. Miller



S. Zeigler



Bill Flynn

"After all these years," said Mrs. Zeigler, "this is the first time I've won."

She said she wasn't sure how she would spend the \$50.

The contest has 15 instant-winner prizes this year, with 12 left to claim. Each week until the grand prize drawing at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 19, numbers will run in the ads in the newspaper until all the instant prizes are claimed.

same week.

Any instant prizes that aren't claimed will be given out the day of the grand prize drawing.

The grand prize is \$1,000 in scrip money, which will be drawn for at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 19, in Centennial Park, unless the weather is bad. If the weather is bad, the drawing will be moved indoors.

For every \$10 shoppers spend at sponsoring businesses between

up to Friday, Dec. 18, they will receive one red ticket. People can also get one ticket a week from the newspaper office and the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce. No purchase is required to win any prize.

Tickets are limited to 250 in any single purchase.

Each week, the tickets will be collected from the participating businesses and placed in a large container.

All prizes will be given in scrip money which can be spent at sponsoring businesses only.

This year's sponsors are Ward Drug Store, Stellar Sales, the Carpet Center, the Bank, Dale's Fish 'n' Fun, the LandMark Inn, Raye's Grocery, Stanley Hardware, Home Planning Center, the Dresser, Ultimate Fertilizer, Ampride and *The Herald*.