

Happy New Year!

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IN FEBRUARY, crews tore down the former Golden Age Center (above) and Sunflower Cinema to get the lot ready for building a new recreation center. The same day the front wall of the center came down, Kenneth Morgan (below, at

right) sat on trial for setting a fire at the former Centennial Bowl and Red Crown Lounge four years earlier.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

The year brought changes

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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As 2009 comes to a blustery close, it's time to take a look back at all of the changes and happenings in Oberlin and Decatur County.

In some ways, the past 365 days have brought many changes, but in others things have stayed the same.

Looking over the 52 *Oberlin Herald's* published this year, the articles tell about many of those changes and top stories over the year. Broken down by the 12 months, those stories include:

In January:

- Decatur County commissioners signed the first of many checks for the new senior/recreation center downtown. The check locked in a price with Sappa Valley Construction for the new building, which will house the Golden Age Center, Sunflower Cinema and a new bowling alley.

- Koerperich Bookbinders in Selden was named one of 24 finalists for the "8 Wonders of Kansas Commerce."

- Duane Dorshorst was named superintendent of the Oberlin School District in a 7-0 vote by board members. He became superintendent at the beginning of July, keeping his old job as principal of the Oberlin Elementary School.

- The Oberlin City Council hired Austin Gilley as the new city administrator.

- Toward the end of the month, volunteers started a salvage process in the theater and senior center, setting aside anything usable.

In February:

- The 180 House, run by King's Alcohol/Drug Treatment Center of Wichita, closed. The staff worked with young men to get them back on their feet after kicking alcohol or drug addiction.

- The Council continued to discuss a \$4 million water treatment plant. One idea was for the city to be part of a pilot project for a reverse osmosis plant.



- The former Golden Age Center and the old theater came crashing down towards the end of the month, with the debris hauled off by the county crew.

- After two days of listening to witnesses, a jury found Kenneth Morgan guilty of arson in a fire that damaged the Red Crown Lounge and Centennial Bowling Alley four years ago.

- Francisco A. Duenas-Castaneda, 35, and Laura Y. Salcido Cruz, 31, were arrested by state troopers near milepost 94 on U.S. 36 with over 200 pounds of marijuana in their vehicle.

In March:

- Work on the Golden Age Cen-

ter demolition had to stop to allow the Kansas Department of Health and Environment time to test for asbestos. None was found.

- Plans were made to open a Subway sandwich shop on the north end of the Ampride building at the intersection of U.S. 83 and U.S. 36.

- A political "Tea Party" was set for people to express a love for their country.

In April:

- Around 50 people attend the tea party, expressing their unhappiness with what they see as a big-spending, controlling federal government and their support for the country and Constitution.

- Dr. Obed Saint-Louis, who started at the beginning of February at the Oberlin Clinic, with privileges at the Decatur County Hospital, resigned and left town.

- A state inspector ordered the restrooms at Sappa Park, really just outhouses, closed after finding the restrooms have no bottom and no holding tanks. The park committee started plans to build new bathrooms.

- K-Love replaced American Family Radio on the 91.3 frequency in Decatur County. Both are Christian radio stations.

- A city survey got a 27 percent return, showing that 87 percent

(See YEAR on Page 12)

Theater plans show New Year's

The Sunflower Cinema plans to be open for a New Year's Eve celebration with three separate showings and the recreation area north of the theater will be open for use and inspection.

Greg Lohofener, who led the project to build the new community center, said the theater will show a DVD of "G-Force" at 7 p.m., "Iron Man" at 8:50 p.m. and "2012" about 11 p.m.

People can see all three movies for \$25, including one free popcorn, candy and pop per person, or they can pay for each movie separately and make purchases at the concession stand.

The recreation area, with air hockey, pin ball and two video arcade games, will also be available to be used.

It's a different way to spend New Year's Eve, said Mr. Lohofener, more of a family atmosphere.

Tickets will be available that night at the door, he said.

With the first two-thirds of the building project done, Mr. Lohofener added, he is working on the third, the bowling alley.

He said he is gathering bids now, but thinks the need will be to raise about \$175,000 to finish that area, including \$40,000 to \$50,000 more for the recreation area.

Mr. Lohofener added that they will have some work days, but don't have anything set up yet. For instance, he said, they plan to have a "ceiling-tile-hanging day" and a painting day.

Anyone who wants to donate money to get the bowling alley finished can call him at 475-3322 or Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., at 475-2901.

Student killed in head-on crash south of Hoxie

A 2006 Decatur Community High School graduate will be remembered for her kindness, beauty, positive attitude and how she affected those around her.

Lora Marietta, 22, was killed in a head-on collision last Monday on K-23.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Miss Marietta was driving a 2005 Chevrolet Cobalt north on K-23, about three miles north of I-70 at 6:25 p.m. She was on her way home from Manhattan, where she was a senior at Kansas State University.

The patrol said Manuel Ortega, 51, Garden City, was southbound in a grain semi. The report says that Mr. Ortega went into the left lane to pass a slow-moving vehicle and his rig plowed head-on into Miss Marietta's car.

Mr. Ortega was taken to the Sheridan County Hospital in Hoxie with possible injuries. His son Jesus, 27, rode in the ambulance with him.

Miss Marietta was pronounced dead at the scene.

On Monday, Technical Trooper Tod Hileman, a public relations officer for the patrol, said charges have been filed against Mr. Ortega for involuntary manslaughter.

The Mariettas, Alan and Judith, buried their daughter on Saturday. Mr. Marietta said the outpouring of condolences and greetings has been

extraordinary. It's been much appreciated by the family, he said.

Almost immediately after the news of the accident started to spread, Miss Marietta's friends and family started a page for her on the Facebook social networking website. Since then, people have posted many comments and memories:

"Lora was beautiful, intelligent and hard-working," wrote Jackie Votapka, "but the best part was that she was as beautiful on the inside as she was on the outside. She not only knew how to live, she knew how to die and where she was going."

"Of all her great achievements, the greatest will be her lasting effect on all who knew her. I pray that all of us will be better, kinder and more loving people because we knew and loved her. Please keep all her family in your prayers. We will miss her forever."

Miss Marietta was the co-vice president in her 2006 graduating class at Decatur Community High School. She was involved in a multitude of activities, including volleyball, basketball, track, cross country, National Honor Society, student council, Kayettes, Spanish Club, D-Club, weight club, Teens Acting and Caring Together, powerlifting, prom, district honor band, Chanté, math relays, graduation marching

(See CAR on Page 12)

Food drive ends soon, needs a few more items

With just a few days left, the annual food drive at Stanley Hardware needs less than 200 items to meet the goal of at least 2,000 items by the New Year.

The drive started just after Thanksgiving, with several hundred items of non-perishable food, toiletries and cleaning supplies arriving even before the display window was ready. Since then, students from the schools, organizations and individuals have dropped off one or

more things for the drive.

Each of those items was placed in the south window at the store.

As of Monday morning, the count was 1,807 items in the window, leaving 193 to go.

The drive ends next week, when students will take the food to the Decatur County Food Pantry in the basement of the United Church.





AS A MEMBER OF 4-H, Lora Marietta (above) sold many goodies during the Decatur County Food Auction at the fair.

Miss Marietta (below) took part in many school activities, including her senior prom in 2006. — Herald file photos

*Car accident claims young life

(Continued from Page 1A) usher, state champion powerlifter, homecoming and science club.

Karli Fredrickson, who was just one year behind Lora in school, said Lora was a really good friend who was always there. The young women were in Lutheran Youth Fellowship together and babysat together. Miss Fredrickson said her friend was one of those people who was just an all-around great person. She was great with kids and older people.

Miss Fredrickson said her friend played the French horn, was patient, athletic and always had time to talk.

She added that Lora was really dedicated to the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps, which she took part in at Kansas State University. Miss Marietta received a scholarship from Col. Delbert Townsend.

Last year, she graduated from Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga., completing five jumps and earning her wings. Her dad was there to pin them on.

Miss Marietta and her sister Leah were noted powerlifters and competed in national and international championships. In 2004, she went to the Sub-Junior World Powerlifting Championship in Pretoria, South Africa. She took third in her class.

Her aunt, Marcia Emig, wrote online, "Dream as if you'll live forever, live as if you'll die today," James Dean. This was by Lora's senior picture in her high school yearbook, and it really fit her. I not only lost a beautiful, beautiful niece, but also a good friend. Her memory will always live in my heart as well as in all the people her short life affected. Out of sight, but never forgotten. Heaven has gotten a beautiful, loving, caring new angel."

Colleen Rittmann said one of the first things she thinks of about Miss

Marietta is her beaming smile.

"I rarely encountered Lora without receiving a friendly smile," said Mrs. Rittmann. "I had the privilege of interacting with Lora in multiple ways. As her junior high cheerleading sponsor, I remember a practice where her future weightlifting skills were displayed. The girls had been divided into pairs to work on stunts and Lora and her partner called me over to review what they had come up with. Her partner was taller and outweighed her, but they demonstrated a partner stunt with Lora as the base, and a very strong one at that. It was one of Lora's many examples of putting other's first, as this partner usually didn't have the opportunity to be the flyer in a stunt."

Mrs. Rittman said she was also impressed by Miss Marietta's ease of interacting with people of all ages, whether mentoring younger 4-H members, working on a fund raiser with fellow Lutheran Youth Fellowship members or her compassionate care for the older generation.

"God's light definitely shown through Lora," said Mrs. Rittman, "as she was always willing to give of her time and talents and put others first."

Lora Elizabeth Marietta was born May 28, 1987, in Oberlin, the daughter of Alan and Judith (Schreiber) Marietta.

She and her twin brother and two sisters grew up in Oberlin and attended Oberlin Elementary School and Decatur Community High School. She graduated in 2006.

She was working on degrees in psychology and preoccupational therapy at K-State and had been listed on the dean's list since her first semester. In July, she graduated from the U.S. Army's Leadership Development and Assessment Course with honors. She was a Distinguished Military



Student at K-State and Distinguished Military Graduate for the U.S. Army Cadet Command. She was ranked 25th out of 4,783 nationwide in the 2010 class of graduating ROTC cadets.

Her hobbies and interests included running with her dog, reading, shopping, and spending time with her family. Her niece, Alaxis, held a special spot in her heart.

Survivors include her parents; her boyfriend, Devon Krenzel; her twin brother, Bret Marietta, Great Bend; two sisters, Loni and Jeremy Jensen, Newton, and Leah and Travis Carreño, Wichita; and her paternal grandparents, Wayne and Odetta Marietta, Russell.

She was preceded in death by infant twin brothers, Michael and Paul; maternal grandparents, Carl and Clara Schreiber; and an uncle, Mark Hasselbusch.

Funeral services were Saturday afternoon at the church in Oberlin. The Rev. Kevin Schnakenberg officiated and burial was in the Oberlin Cemetery.

Memorials were established to the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center or the church, in care of Pauls Funeral Home, 121 N. Penn, Oberlin, Kan., 67749.

*Year brings changes to county

(Continued from Page 1A) of those who responded agreed or strongly agreed that Oberlin is a great place to live, while 13 percent disagreed.

Chamber of Commerce director Tina Watson quit.

In May:

- The council decided to allow golf carts and four-wheelers on city streets. Rules for the vehicles were set later in the year.

- The city started renting portable rest rooms for Sappa Park.

- The staff at the city office started to clean up \$80,000 in delinquent utility bills on 330 electricity, water and sewer accounts.

- Pharmacist Rusty Addleman retired, closing his downtown store after 103 years in the Addleman family.

In June:

- Vintage race cars came to the Decatur County Speedway. Over 30 cars show up to speed around dirt track.

- The search for a new doctor for the Oberlin Clinic started.

- The roof was on and walls up on the new senior center, but donations were being taken to finish the three-step project.

- A hail storm cleaned out wheat fields near Selden.

- Members of the Oberlin Convention and Visitor's Bureau agreed to help pay for a study for a new motel or hotel.

In July:

- Values for personal property, oil and state-assessed utilities were down. Decatur County saw a 19.7 percent overall drop in valuation numbers.

- The city's property valuations stayed steady as the council started budget talks. Later in the month, the council approved a city budget, including \$500,000 in improvements at the airport with the stipulation that the money won't be spent unless the city receives a federal stimulus grant.

In August:

- Grain elevators were full with a bumper wheat crop. Grain was piled on the ground at several locations.

- Swine flu, later named H1N1 flu, was confirmed in two teenagers here.

- A ribbon cutting was held for the Pheasants Forever wetlands at Sappa Park. Dirt work did not start until fall, however.

- Dave Nichols, a former Decatur Health Systems employee, was charged with 22 counts of writing checks on the Wheat Ridge Terrace

Apartments account for his own benefit. The charges, all level 8 non person felonies, totaled \$37,766.

- The council approved a "scope of service" agreement, moving the airport project forward.

In September:

- Oberlin's local-access cable channel 7 shut down.

- A petition was started to stop spending on a new runway at the airport. The City Council agreed to put off a decision on the airport petition to allow for a public meeting sponsored by the Decatur Tomorrow Steering Committee.

- The county approved a budget with a 2.882-mill increase in the property tax.

- The council agrees to a plan to spend just under \$17,000 to put bathrooms inside the existing shelter house at Sappa Park. The park committee sent in paperwork for a 60/40 grant, with 40 percent of total coming from the state. The project is estimated at \$54,791.

In October:

- The council votes unanimously to send the airport ordinance to a special vote.

- The county clerk sets the airport special election and a special election for the City of Norcatour for Tuesday, Dec. 15, by mail ballot.

- The Golden Age Center was completed and ready for use.

- The clinic hired Jennifer Taylor of Phillipsburg, a physician assistant. She planned to commute here.

In November:

- Results from last year's state assessment tests win the Oberlin School District 12 "Standard of Excellence" awards.

- The Decatur County Health Department and school nurse teamed up to give students H1N1 flu vaccinations.

- The new Sunflower Cinema opened with a packed house.

In December:

- The council decides to buy solar mixers from Pond Solutions of Bismarck, N.D., for \$121,400.

- The ordinance to bar spending state, federal, local or private money for the runway project at the airport failed by a 2-1 margin vote.

- In Norcatour, voters agreed that clerk and treasurer don't have to live inside the city limits.

- The Oberlin council looked at possible policy and price changes for The Gateway. Those include turning the facility into more of an events center.

Farmers can give grain to pantry

Farmers wanting to donate a few bushels of their crop to the Decatur County Food Pantry can do so at Oberlin grain elevators.

Both Hansen Mueller and the Decatur Co-op are taking part in the program, elevator employees said.

Farmers should let the elevators know how many bushels of which crop they would like to donate to the pantry, which is run by the Decatur County Ministerial Association.

That grain will then be sold and the money will go to the pantry.

Council OKs officers using accrued time off

The Oberlin City Council approved allowing Oberlin police officers time after the end of the year to use their accrued time off.

At the council meeting Thursday, Dec. 17, Mayor Joe Stanley said the officers haven't been able to use their time off and would like to roll it over into the new year.

Two officers, said City Administrator Austin Gilley, haven't been able to take vacation time because the third officer has been on medical leave. That has meant a lot of extra shifts for the two. Some city employees might not agree with rolling the time over because they are going to lose time at the end of the year, said Mr. Gilley, but this is a special circumstance, said Mr. Gilley.

Six employees have an average

of 82 hours that need to be used by the end of the year, he said.

Why? asked Councilwoman Rhonda May.

Some might say the city is understaffed or their department is, said Mr. Gilley, and some like to save their time off.

Ms. May said she would be willing to make an exception for the police department because someone was out for health reasons. They couldn't take any time off. Those employees who didn't take time because they thought something needed to be done on the job, she said, that's not an exception. Employees are supposed to take a vacation and then come back to work, she said.

The police department, said Mr.

Gilley, is the only one included in the request for an exception. It will affect the police chief, he said, but he has been able to take some time off in the past few months.

This is an unforeseen manpower

shortage, said Councilman Bill Riedel. The officers couldn't take a vacation because someone was out.

The council approved the exception for the two officers.

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