

People air health care concerns

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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More than 80 people jammed the room at the regular monthly meeting of the Decatur County hospital board last Monday, at least the first 30 minutes, to talk about recruiting doctors and the resignation of a nurse practitioner at the Oberlin clinic.

Board president Ron Jansonius told the group that crowded into the lobby of the speciality clinic that it had come to his attention that people had been encouraged to attend the meeting. He pointed out that doctors and physician assistants at the clinic don't work for the hospital or the hospital board. Jonna Inman, who has sent from the clinic, doesn't work for the hospital or the board,

he said, and the hospital or the board have no power over employment at the clinic. It's not appropriate to discuss the affairs of the clinic, which is a private business owned by the doctors, he said.

Mr. Jansonius said, at the same time, the board members are interested in hearing the concerns of people on health care during the public comment session.

Everyone who wants to talk needs to state their name, he said, and most of all, comments need to be respectful of others.

Audrey Pavlicek said her daughter, who is a nurse practitioner in Hoxie, had come to her appointment with Dr. Elizabeth Sliter at the clinic to help ask questions.

She was rude to my daughter, said Mrs.

Pavlicek. The very first words on the next visit, she said, were that Mrs. Pavlicek's daughter really "pissed her off." She said her daughter was professional and the doctor wasn't.

Mrs. Pavlicek added that she's ready to go to McCook for health care.

"If we lose Jonna," said Donna VanPelt, "we have nothing. She is the only one who will listen."

If we start losing doctors, said Judy Shirley, then there won't be a hospital. If this is just a witch hunt then, the priorities have been lost.

After talking around, said Jay Anderson, a retired veterinarian and former city councilman who had been urging people

to attend the meeting, it's surprising how many people have already started to go to McCook. When that happens, he said, Oberlin's grocery store will suffer and so will the drug store.

"We have reached a stage that is critical," he added.

He added that he doesn't even know who owns the clinic anymore. The building and the equipment belong to the county, said Mr. Jansonius, but the practice is owned by the doctors.

The rumors are that Dr. Sliter has the controlling interest, said Dr. Anderson. There are lots of people asking questions. It might not be time to wait any longer. The main thing, he said, is that the people

want the board to know that they have our backing.

Could the hospital have a doctor or a nurse practitioner on staff? asked Jerry Lohofener. Mr. Jansonius said the board is and has looked into options.

Barbara Dehlinger said she spent the spring in the hospital and saw both of the doctors in that time. They did a good job she said. The care the nursing staff gave was absolutely superb.

"The resignation of Jonna has thrown us into a panic," she said. "We are scared. We don't want to lose our facilities. We are here to tell you our concerns and give support."

(See PEOPLE on Page 10A)

Celebration planned for holiday Sunday

The town should be hopping for the Fourth of July this year, with an all-day celebration planned in City Park and on Main Street on Sunday.

With the 125th Anniversary of the city quickly approaching, events have been planned throughout the year to celebrate. The souped-up all-day Fourth of July celebration is the first big one.

Kem Bryan has helped organize churches, organizations and businesses to hold events, starting at 11 a.m. with a community church service in City Park and ending with a fireworks display at the Decatur County Fairgrounds after dark.

Everyone is invited to the service, planned by the Decatur County Ministerial Association. Following it will be a potluck in the park. Everyone should bring a dish to share.

Plates, napkins, cups and utensils will be provided by Farmers Bank and Trust.

Mrs. Bryan said people are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or a blanket to sit on.

Throughout the day, there will be kids' activities, games for adults, music and a variety of food.

From 1 to 7 p.m., the city has agreed to close Penn Avenue from North Street to Hall Street to allow for activities downtown. Harvest trucks and other traffic will have to maneuver around the closed street.

Mrs. Bryan asked for the street to be closed so kids won't be running out in the street with cars and trucks.

Rusty Adleman said he put jars out to collect donations for the show. He said he ordered more fireworks. (See FIREWORKS on Page 9A)

Clearing the track



CONDUCTOR KEVIN COENEN from Holdrege, Neb., was down on the street, trying to make sure the engines of a Nebraska-Kansas-Colorado Rail Link train stayed on the tracks Saturday. The train brought empty grain cars for the

Decatur Co-op to load with wheat, but because the crossing at Penn Ave. hadn't been used in a while, it was jammed with mud. Mr. Coenen had to shovel out the top of the rails as the train inched forward, then backed off.



A **PORCUPINE** in the park was hard for Karen Bennett (above with her granddaughter Ashley Bennett) to believe. But, the quilly critter (below) was trapped in a tree just waiting for all the sightseers to go away.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Girl finds porcupine at Boy Scout Park

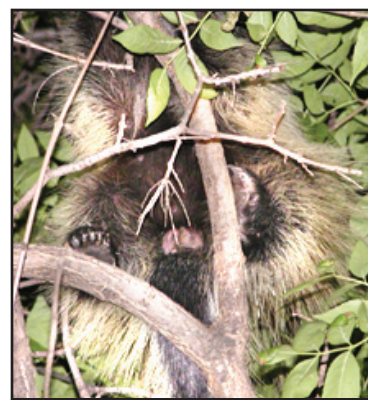
By **STEVE HAYNES**
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Ashley Bennett was fairly bouncing when we got to the park, about dusk on Thursday.

"Porcupine. Porcupine, Porcupine!" she chanted.

That's what the dispatcher on the police radio had said: A group of people were watching a porcupine in Scout, or Chautauqua, Park on the west side of town. They had it up a tree and were shining a light in its eyes to keep it still.

"Did you call animal control," the officer replied, apparently hoping to pass on any spiny encounters, and



the dispatcher said she had. Ashley, it turns out, had discovered. (See SPINY on Page 9A)

Trees hot topic for former councilman

The City Council told a former councilman he can keep four trees he planted in the cemetery where they are, at least until the city can sort out conflicting stories.

At a council meeting on Thursday, June 17, former councilman Jay Anderson said he had received a letter from Mayor Joe Stanley and Councilman Rob McFee about several trees he planted in the cemetery.

The letter, he said, says that the trees were planted without the knowledge of the cemetery sexton. It "respectfully" asked him to remove the trees to a spot in the cemetery that the sexton approved, said Dr. Anderson.

He said he had talked to former City Administrator Austin Gilley

about the trees.

"Where did this letter originate from?" Dr. Anderson asked, referring to the letter.

Mr. McFee, who was serving as council president since the mayor was gone, said it had originated out of an executive session.

There was some question if the council could make a decision to send a letter in closed session. City Attorney Steve Hirsch said the council could ask someone to write letter in a closed session, or someone could volunteer to write a letter to solve a problem, but it could not take a vote.

"They (the council) knows better than that to make a decision," he said.

Dr. Anderson wondered why they

had to send a formal letter, since they all know him.

"I worked here for eight years," he said. "A call would have worked."

He said the location of the trees had been OK'd with Mr. Gilley and the sexton, Nan Stanley, who was not present. A contract was set up for Larry VanOtterloo, a tree contractor to take care of the trees for three years. Dr. Anderson said Jerry Lohofener was with him when they talked about the trees.

The couple planted the trees in memory of their relatives. The trees are spread out in the older section close to his relatives' stones.

Sometime last fall, said Mr. Lohofener. Dr. Anderson asked him to go to the cemetery, along with Mr. Gilley and Mr. VanOtterloo. Mr.

Lohofener said Mr. Gilley liked the ideas they came up with for the trees and agreed that it could be done if OK'd by the sexton on placement.

Mr. Lohofener said he believes this issue has been poorly handled and whoever wrote this letter owes Mr. Anderson and his wife an apology.

Dr. Anderson said he went and talked to Ms. Stanley and she told them with rather "sexually suggestive" language where the trees could be planted. She gave them some flags and showed them where she didn't want the trees.

Mrs. Anderson said she was surprised at the language the sexton used and that she didn't seem to care where they were planted. (See MAN on Page 9A)

City utility bills won't get mailed

The city's billing computer system crashed this month, so utility bills won't be sent out at the beginning of July.

Instead, said interim City Administrator Karen Larson, the city is asking people to pay the same amount next month that they did at the beginning of June for the May billing.

The city will then adjust the bills in July, when it expects to have its new billing system up and running.

Although the readings for the utility bills have been done, said Mrs. Larson, because of the computer crash, the office staff can't input the

readings or print out the bills.

The city has been gearing up for the new system for a while, she said. Now with the old system crashed, the city will use the new system in the next billing cycle.

Mrs. Larson said people need to make sure that they include their service address and the name or the person or business on the account with their check. The city won't be able to get any bank drafts.

The city will be sending out a notice using the mailing list for water letters, she said, but that might not reach all bill payers. The bills include electric, water, sewer and trash fees.

Food pantry needs help

With the economy still struggling and unemployment still high, the Decatur County Food Pantry is running low on just about everything.

Anyone wanting to make donations either food or cash can do so between 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. (See PANTRY on Page 9A)

Trees uprooted by severe storm

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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It hailed, it rained, it poured and it flooded Main Street and low-lying areas around town last Monday as a big thunderstorm swept through Decatur County, smashing limbs and whole trees but apparently doing little damage to buildings.

Oberlin and Decatur County were under a severe thunderstorm watch for the evening, and at 10 p.m., the National Weather Service office in Goodland issued a severe thunderstorm warning for Oberlin.

On the weather radar, it looked like a storm from the west and one from the south would collide about the time they got to Oberlin.

As the storms started to rumble, pea-size hail started to fall in town. Some reported a little bit bigger

than that inside city limits.

Then the rain started. A trained weather observer in Oberlin reported 1.75 inches of rain from that storm.

It came fast enough that the street downtown was curb-deep during the shower. Cass Avenue, or Canal Street, as many call it, was still running the next afternoon.

Many people woke up to find limbs down and some trees uprooted. Some of those trees and branches fell on homes and fences around town.

Jacque Boultinghouse, county emergency management director, said she thought after driving around town to look at the damage it was probably straight-line (See TREE on Page 9A)



*Man asks about trees he planted

(Continued from Page 1A) said she doesn't understand how the sexton can say she wasn't consulted, because they did talk to her three or four times.

Mr. McFee said the two stories the council has heard don't match. He said the council was told that the Andersons were told not to plant the trees where they are.

That is absolutely not true, said Mrs. Anderson.

The letter from the mayor and council president, he said, states

the trees have to be removed by last Friday or will be removed by the sexton.

The council heard different information, said Mr. McFee.

"Well, please handle it correctly," Dr. Anderson asked.

The council agreed the city will forgo moving of the trees until all the questions are answered.

Dr. Anderson asked for an understanding that the trees be protected from weed whipping and other work at the cemetery.

*Spiny creature found in park

(Continued from Page 1A) ered the critter when she was walking Mac, a basset hound belonging to Dean and Peggy Groneweg. The 9-year-old, from Indianola, Neb., was staying with her grandparents, Frank and Karen Bennett, who live next door to the Gronewegs.

She said no one would believe her when she ran home to tell them there was a porcupine in the park.

"I looked at it, and it was a porcupine," she said. "I told my grandparents, and they called me a liar."

The Gronewegs, the Bennetts and a few other neighbors were standing around, shining the light on the porcupine, when Jeff Johnson, the

city's animal control officer, pulled up. They told him they were worried about kids from a nearby day-care center who use the park.

Johnson said that if they just went home, the animal would wander off overnight.

"It's been awhile since I spotted a porcupine," he said, adding that in four or five years on the job, he's dealt with birds and bats and skunks and dogs and cats of all kinds, even raccoons, but few porcupines. Mostly, he said, the spiny critters are shy and nocturnal and stay away from people.

The one up the tree probably wished it had.

Hammering away



SWINGING THEIR HAMMERS almost in unison, Oberlin United Methodist youth-group members and a leader helped take down a backyard wall at the church's

parsonage on Thursday. The workers were (from left) Keithen Fortin, Dakota Soderlund, Nolan Wasson and Robert Rouse.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

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*Fireworks to cap day-long events

(Continued from Page 1A) than last year since it's the city's 125th Anniversary, and so he needs more money. He said they are \$800 to \$1,000 short on the price.

He said they are also looking for people who might want to help pass the hat that night. If so, contact him or Carolyn Hackney at the chamber at 475-3441.

To donate, contact Mr. Addleman or drop a check or cash in one of

the jars around town at the banks, the LandMark, Stanley Hardware, Ward Drug Store, Raye's Grocery, Crossroads and Ampride.

For many events, there will be cash or other prizes given, Mrs. Bryan said.

Schedules are available at Raye's Grocery, the Chamber of Commerce office downtown or at the potluck that day. A full schedule appears on Page 5A of today's paper.

Schedule of events for the Fourth of July

Here is the schedule for Oberlin Fourth of July events:

- 11 a.m. — Community church service, City Park,
- Noon — potluck picnic at the park. Bring a dish to share.
- 1 to 2 p.m. — Face painting, tattoos and others by Anthony Marshall, at park.
- 1 to 3 p.m. — Corn tank with money, pool activities for \$1 a child or \$2 an adult and beach volleyball in the park, at park.
- Events move downtown after lunch:
 - 1, 3 and 6 p.m. — Silent movies and a regular movie at Sunflower Cinema.
 - 2 to 7 p.m. — Cookies and beverages at the Golden Age Center.
 - 2 to 7 p.m. — Recreation center open.
 - 3 to 3:30 p.m. — Kids' bike and "rip stick" races, adult/kid team wheel-barrow race.
 - 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. — Sidewalk chalk outside the gazebo. The sheriff's office will be handing out candy downtown.

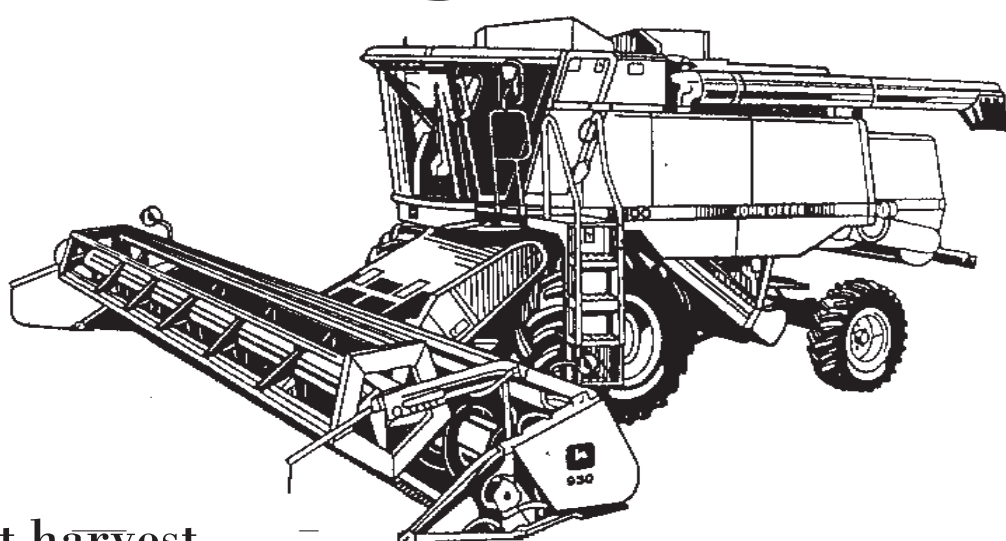
- 3:30 to 4 p.m. — Lawn mower and push-mower races, including tractor-style and zero-radius mowers. Participants bring their own riding mowers, but a one-handed push mower will be supplied.
- 3 to 3:30 p.m. — Capella Nova performs in the gazebo in Centennial Park.
- 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. — Patriotic background music sponsored by the Church of Christ.
- 5 to 7 p.m. — Hot dog and watermelon feed on the west side of Golden Age Center.
- 6:30 p.m. — Parade and ice cream social sponsored by and at the Good Samaritan Center.
- 7:30 p.m. — Historical scavenger hunt sponsored by Last Indian Raid Museum.
- 8:30 p.m. — Cell-phone texting contest at the Golden Age Center.
- 8:30 p.m. — Kids "construct it" contest at the Golden Age Center.
- After Dark — The day will be finish with fireworks at the fairground sponsored by the Oberlin Business Alliance.

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*Pantry needs food

(Continued from Page 1A) Monday through Friday at the United Church.

Melanie Anderson, who works at the pantry, said they have hit their summer slump. It happens every year, she said, just normally not as early.

At the beginning of 2010, said Ms. Anderson, the pantry helped a lot of people. In January, she said, the pantry served 99 people, when normally it's around 20 people a month. She said she's not sure why there was such a large increase, but because of that, the pantry is out of

items a little faster than normal.

Ms. Anderson said the pantry could use tuna, canned meats, sugar, flour, all canned vegetables and fruits. Actually, the pantry could use just about everything, she said.

They can also accept frozen meat or other items as long as they are in date.

Each of the churches take a month a year, said Ms. Anderson, to collect items from their congregations for the pantry. The twelfth month is covered by the food drives by Stanley Hardware and the Teens for Christ.

Council to discuss water

The Oberlin City Council plans to talk about a few items tabled in June when it meets at 7 p.m. Thursday.

Interim City Administrator Karen Larson said the council will talk about the resolutions for the two ways to finance a proposed water treatment plant. Those include is-

suing general obligation bonds or revenue bonds. The council will also look at an agreement to give the corner lot to the new owners of the Oberlin Inn at the intersection of U.S. 36 and U.S. 83 and to help them tear down the old filling station.



AFTER THE STORM last Monday night, Chris Nelson cleaned up branches off his lawn.

— Photo by Sarah Fredrickson

*Tree branches fall in storm

(Continued from Page 1A) winds that caused the damage or maybe a downburst. With a tornado, damaged items normally look twisted, she said.

People were urged to report their damage to the county dispatch office. Most of the damage was from trees, she said. Some of those looked like they needed pruning of some sort before the storm. Some weren't as healthy and others looked like really hardy trees.

Several large trees in the city were uprooted and still lie where they fell.

Ms. Boultinghouse said she hasn't heard anything about a disaster declaration for the storm or help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. She did say that in order for there to be any help from the government for individuals, 25 percent of all the homes in the county have to be damaged beyond being livable.

*People support hospital board

(Continued from Page 1A) Why can't the hospital have it's own doctors? asked Steve Arnold.

It's not that the hospital can't, said Administrator Lynn Doeden. She added that they have been looking into it. The hospital has to be certified to do Medicare Part B. That takes six to 12 months to get. Oberlin Medical Arts is a classified as a rural health clinic, she said. Before that was approved, the hospital didn't want to interfere. Mrs. Doeden said they want to work together.

It appears it's a problem to get a doctor or a family doctor here, said Mr. Arnold.

The recruiters are looking, said Mrs. Doeden. "Hoxie is getting doctors," said Ms. VanPelt. "Why can't Oberlin? Why can't Oberlin even keep it's nurse practitioner? She's done nothing but good."

Agree, said Mrs. Doeden. "Who does she work for?" asked Ms. VanPelt. "If the hospital has no say over the clinic, then this meeting means nothing."

It does mean something, responded Mary Henzel. One of the things Oberlin has going for it is marvelous health care. If that's lost at the clinic, it will hurt the numbers at both places.

This is a wonderful facility and community, said Mary Ann Erickson. We need to keep positive for the future. It would be wonderful if the hospital could start interviewing doctors. She added that she wanted to thank the board members for all their hard work.

There are four recruiters working for the hospital to find doctors, said Mrs. Doeden. She added that she called all the recruiters that day and they don't have anything. She said she makes four to 10 phone calls every day for the physician search, but there haven't been any doctors coming through the door yet.

Kem Bryan asked what the top four roadblocks to getting a doctor are. Mr. Jansonius said he wasn't sure what the top four were, but one is the location in western Kansas. Lots of doctors think they have a better opportunity in bigger cities. Nebraska has possibly been more aggressive on growing their own doctors for rural practice. He said they have hoped to start that, but it takes a number of years. The number of patients could be a roadblock, too

Someone asked if there was anyone at the meeting who had invited Chelsey Gillogly with Congressman Jerry Moran's office to listen to the meeting.

Mr. Jansonius thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for the comments. He added that Mrs. Doeden would work on setting something up with the hospital.

Mrs. Doeden said she's been working on addressing some of the issues since the day after the meeting.

When people look for a job, said Mrs. Lohofener, they look at what's gone on there. This might not leave a good opinion of working for the clinic.

Mrs. Lohofener apologized for not informing the board earlier that people were going to come to the meeting. The hospital board makes tough decisions, she said. She added that they want the board to know the community is behind them.

Jean Leitner, who has worked at the hospital for 35 years, said she has great concerns about losing physicians. She said she wants to continue to have a job. Looking around the room, said Mrs. Leitner, she has cared for most of the people there. She said she believes that the community will not let the facility die.

Mrs. Leitner asked if there is a program to help pay back part of a doctor's education. Yes, said Mr. Jansonius, there is, and it's up for negotiation with each candidate.

There was discussion on the need to look at what the roadblock to hiring and keeping doctors. If it's the number of patients, the amount of pay or possible personality conflicts, people said, then the community needs to know.

There was even talk about if the hospital could take over the clinic and all have it be operated by one agency.

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