

## Lighting project is approved

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The Oberlin School Board approved new lighting and curtains for the high school auditorium for a grand total of just under \$100,000 at its meeting last Monday.

A bid from Innovation out of Colorado came in at \$78,284 for materials and \$15,960 for the labor for a total of \$94,244.

While the board started the meeting at the district office, the members adjourned and re-convened at the high school to look at projects done over the summer and discuss the auditorium.

Superintendent Duane Dorshorst said a bar of lights over the audience and the front curtain both have to go. That curtain covers some of the most beautiful architectural features of the historic building, he said.

Leigh Davis, an English teacher who is in charge of the Drama Club and directs school plays, said there is no room in front of the curtain to do anything. Then the first black curtain, which is several feet back, could be used as the grand curtain,

she said.

All of the curtains on the stage, said Mr. Dorshorst, are too old to keep their fire rating. If nothing else is done, he said, the stage needs new curtains.

The Innovation company is owned by the same people who own the Pepsi Center and the Colorado Avalanche hockey team, he said.

The project, said Mr. Dorshorst, has nothing to do with sound, but would replace the lights and the main control panel.

The quote also, he said, doesn't include power supply, which he thought would come in around \$5,000.

There will be two dimmer boxes, said Mr. Dorshorst, so the whole system won't have to be run to have lights in the auditorium.

It's a big project, and it has a big price tag, he said.

Although other companies have been asked to take a look at the proposal and make a bid, none has.

Another part of the project is to hang a projector screen like the one (See BOARD on Page 8A)

## Jennings plans to hold Fun Day all day Saturday

Grab your friends and neighbors and make plans to enjoy a full day of activities starting at 8 a.m. Saturday at the 19th Annual Jennings Firemen's Fun Day.

The day's activities begin at 8 a.m. with the Health Fair at the Sunflower Senior Center, along with a Kolache Coffee at the Jennings United Methodist Church. Kolaches will be sold for \$1 each at the front of the fire house until they are all gone.

A community garage sale and bake sale will also begin at 8 a.m. at the American Legion building.

At 10 a.m., there will be a scavenger hunt at the Legion; children's games; demonstrations by Trooper Tod Hileman of the Kansas Highway Patrol and Matt "Brother Yo" Johnson, a champion Yoyo'er from Yountville, at the fire station; a wobble trap shoot a half mile north

of Jennings at the Kenny Wildeman farm, plus a cake walk in the City Hall and bingo at the Senior Center.

At 11 a.m., the Czech Museum opens and Hoxie's Old Time Band will perform in front of the fire house. At 11:30 a.m., Colby Implement will have a safety demonstration in front of the fire house and the lunch counter will open in the fire house.

The parade will line up time at 12:30 p.m. at the south end of Pennsylvania Avenue. Individuals, floats, bikes, pets, horses and vehicles, and machinery, old or new, all are welcome. The parade theme is "Celebrate the Past, Present and Future."

Queen candidates must register at the parade site, then may join the parade at the City Hall. The reigning (See FUN DAY on Page 8A)



## Students sign wall

**OUTSIDE OBERLIN ELEMENTARY** School on Thursday, counselor Sheila Jansonius (above) painted Grace Roberts' hand yellow so she could put her handprint on the school's "Wall of Excellence." Gracie Vontz (left) signed her name. Skyler Brown (below) washed the paint off her hand.



## Company plans to cover area with fiber optic system

By **STEVE HAYNES**  
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Nex-Tech, a telecommunications firm based in Hays, plans to cover Oberlin and Norcatar with a fiber-optic system to deliver telephone, Internet and television service with speeds and bandwidth users so far have only dreamed of.

The firm also plans a wireless Internet system serving rural areas of Decatur County and much of northwest Kansas, with towers planned to reach most of the countryside. That work is being financed partly by a federal loan and grant under the

so-called stimulus bill.

The firm, a subsidiary of Lenora-based Rural Telephone Service Co., expects to begin staking locations by early winter and begin construction in the spring. Most work should be done by summer, when the company will begin connecting customers, and all those who sign up should be on by the end of 2011.

Two representatives of the firm were at an Oberlin City Council meeting on Aug. 12 to talk about the system. They noted that the company will need to reach agreement on franchise and video services agreements

with the city.

Valery Rule, business administration supervisor for the firm in Hays, said Nex-Tech wants to become part of the community. She noted that the company has bought a building at 217 N. Penn Ave. which once house a donut shop and later was rented by the Golden Age Center while its new building went up.

Ms. Rule said the firm will hire two customer service representatives, one full time and one part time, and a full-time technician to work out of the office.

The system will be all fiber optic lines

rather than copper wires, she said, with fiber connections right up to the house. Lines will run to nearly every building, though people have the option of keeping their present service or changing to Nex-Tech.

Ms. Rule said the company will offer discounts on bundles including home phone, cellular, Internet and television service. Internet service will be available up to 100 megabytes per second, more than 10 times faster than most current connections.

Only about 6 percent of American households have access to this type of service, she said. Nex-Tech has put similar systems in

other cities it serves, including Norton.

Scott Sproul, community development representative for Nex-Tech in Norton, said the television service will include high definition and 3-D programming not now available here except by satellite. With the fiber optic lines, he said, the system will be easy to upgrade.

"We are really excited about coming into the Oberlin community," Ms. Rule said. "It has been a goal of ours for years."

The project includes fiber optic lines to connect towns and towers, she said. (See COMPANY on Page 8A)

## Gateway to operate without director

After several weeks of closed sessions and some sharp discussion over budget issues, the City of Oberlin and the manager of The Gateway civic center have parted ways.

At a meeting Thursday night, the City Council held a 15-minute closed session at the beginning of the meeting to discuss "nonelected personnel" with the council, clerk and city attorney present. There was no action taken afterward.

However, later in the meeting,

the council called a 30-minute closed session, again for personnel, with the mayor, council, administrator and city attorney, after which the council voted to put the responsibilities of The Gateway manager/director position under the city administrator.

It would be like the rest of the departments in the city, which all report to the administrator, said Councilman Bill Riedel, adding that this could certainly clear up some budget dollars.

On Monday Interim Adminis-

trator Karen Larson said Kathy Brainard, who was the Gateway manager for just under two years, no longer works for the city.

The council made the change effective immediately. There was no vote to terminate the manager, and no one said when or why she left the job.

The Gateway budget has been the focus of much debate over the past year, especially during budget review sessions last month. While the civic center (See CENTER on Page 8A)

## County says no to alert unit on cable

The Decatur County commissioners decided to not fix the cable alert system used in case of bad weather, after hearing that it only reaches 300 to 400 homes in Oberlin and virtually on one out in the county.

Chief Dispatcher Marilyn Mack has been talking with a representative from Eagle Communications of Hays, the cable provider in Oberlin, about the system. There was some question on who was responsible for keeping it going, she said, but it turns out there is nothing in the franchise agreement between Eagle and the city spelling out who's responsible.

A new system, said Mrs. Mack, would cost \$3,450.

Commissioner Ralph Unger asked how many customers Eagle has in Oberlin. Mrs. Mack said she talked with an Eagle representative, who said there are between 300 to 400 units.

She said she's not sure if a unit is one hook-up, or several, so it isn't clear whether the hospital is counted as one or one for every room.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said a new cable company is moving into the area, so the county might need to do an alert system for it also.

Mrs. Mack asked if the system isn't partly the city's responsibility. People in the country don't benefit from this system, she said; they can't even get cable.

After looking into the system, said Mr. Unger, and finding out that a small percentage of the population is covered by it, he didn't think they should do it.

Also, said Mr. McEvoy, the county doesn't have the money.





# \*Board votes on project

(Continued from Page 1A)  
in the gym, he added.  
Mr. Dorshorst said his biggest worry is homecoming, because the auditorium probably wouldn't be done in time. That could be done in the gym, if needed, said Miss Davis.

The money to do the project, said board member Dan Nedland, is one-eighth of the capital outlay budget. Would that leave the district short if it's spent? he asked.

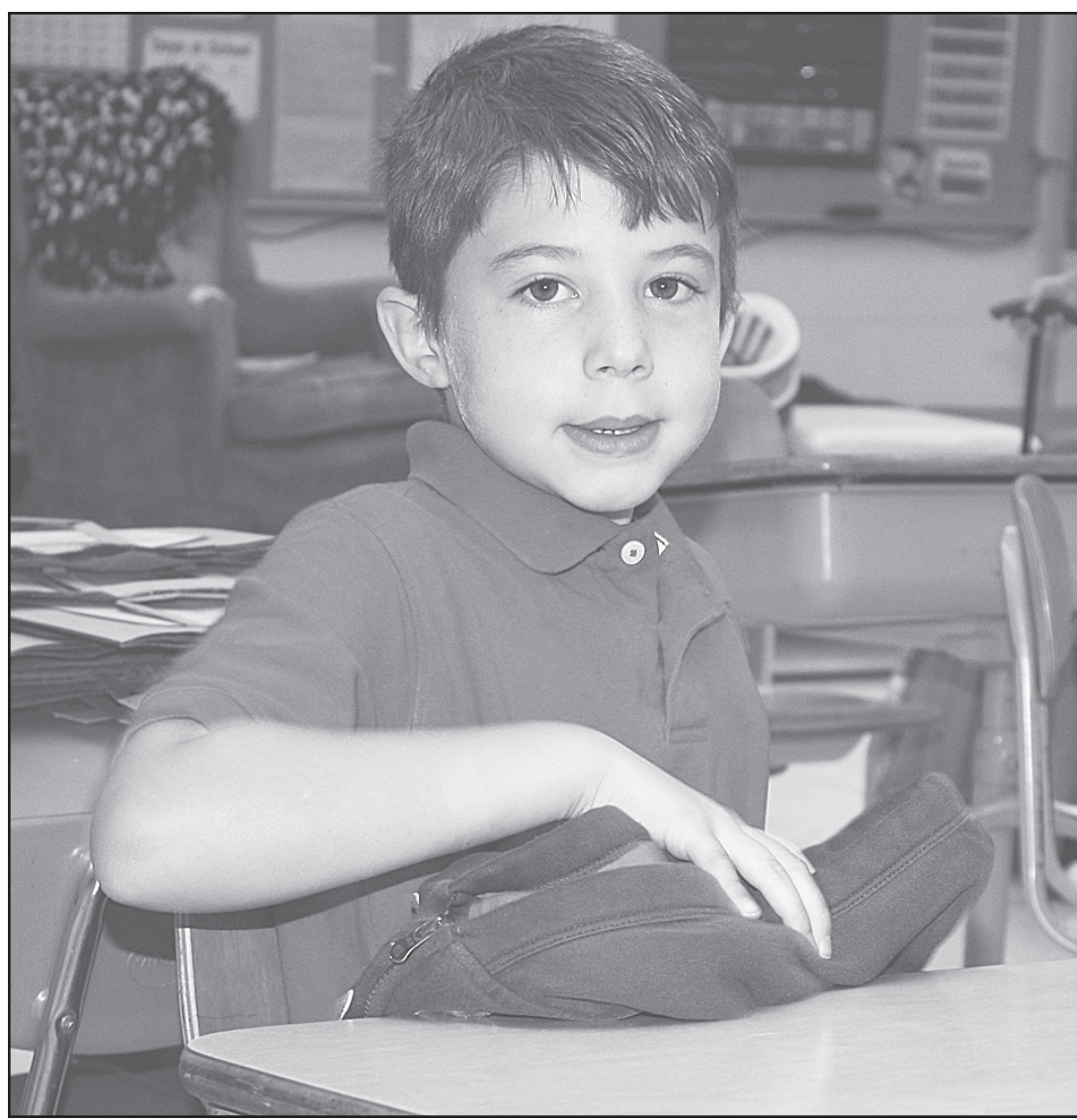
Not really, said Mr. Dorshorst. "I am very biased," said Mr. Nedland," but I move to accept the bid."

There was some discussion if the bid could be accepted because of the size and because the district received only one bid. Mr. Dorshorst said he would call the state Department of Education to see if the bid could be accepted. He said they have spent a year trying to find a company that would come out and bid the project. After talking to another firm, he said he knows Innovation's price is in the ball park.

The board approved the project contingent on what the superintendent finds out.

Mr. Dorshorst said later that he called the state and got the go ahead. A start date for the project hasn't been set.

# Picking a seat



LOGAN HAYWARD found a desk in Cindy Sattler's first-grade room on the first day of classes last Tuesday at Oberlin Elementary School.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

# \*Fun Day event set in Jennings on Saturday

(Continued from Page 1A)  
queen is Allison Hartzog. Ballots for voting for candidates will be at the speaker's stand after the parade. Each person is entitled to one vote up until 5 p.m.

Following the parade, children's games resume and funnel cakes and snow cones will be available. A tractor pull for children from 4 to 12 may participate in the tractor pull and must register at Heritage Park.

The fire department will have raffle tickets for a television, a surround sound system and a video disk player, with the drawing during the evening auction. The winner need not be present.

Other raffle items include an afghan and a table handcrafted by Keith Muirhead. The American Legion will have tickets available for

chances for a shotgun, which won't be given away until December.

Names will be drawn at 4 p.m. for a boy's bike and a girl's bike, sponsored by the Jennings Fire Department and the Jennings Emergency Medical Technicians. All children 12 or under are eligible to sign up one time. The drawing will be held at 4 p.m. and the child must be present to win.

The firemen's team barrel competition begins at 4 p.m. with all area fire departments invited.

The hog roast will be served at 6 p.m., followed by the crowning of the 2010 Fun Day queen and an auction of items donated from businesses and individuals. A street dance with Mobile Music Express deejays from Oberlin will conclude the day's events.

# \*Center to operate without director

(Continued from Page 1A)  
has always lost money, the subsidy from the electric fund is expected to rise from \$50,000 a couple of years ago to \$90,000 this year, with the possibility of spending another \$100,000 from the Bremer bequest left to the city as well.

The council has held several closed sessions recently which resulted in no action at the time, but which observers suspected were focused on The Gateway.

During her time at the civic center, Ms. Brainard drew praise for her creative presentation and menus.

# \*Company reveals its plans

(Continued from Page 1A)  
Combined, the firm's landline and wireless systems will cover 23,000 households and businesses in 21 towns and 11 counties, an area of 4,600 square miles.

Ms. Rule said Jennings, served by a Rural Telephone exchange, already has fiber optic lines. In Oberlin and Norcatur, the firm will compete with the traditional telephone system owned by AT&T.

The entire project will create 17 new jobs, the company says, but could generate or save up to 400 jobs in the area. Contractors and engineers will spend thousands at restaurants and motels during construction.

The wireless system will bring high-speed Internet to rural homes too far out to benefit from current

DSL service or the fiber optic lines. Those lines will be installed only in town. The rural system will deliver competitive service, the firm says, up to 6 mb, and shouldn't be affected by weather as satellite systems are.

The project will extend the Rural/Nex-Tech system from Oberlin to Great Bend and from Scandia to Gove, covering 39,158 households in parts of 17 counties. Cellular service is provided by Nex-Tech Wireless of Hays, an affiliated firm owned by Rural and two other regional telephone companies.

Ms. Rule said the company plans to have a pre-construction meeting with contractors and engineers soon. She said the television system will include local content and a school channel.

In all, the project involves 4,600 miles of fiber cable in 11 counties, including Hays and the surrounding area. The U.S. Department of Ag-

riculture will put up \$101 million, including a \$49 million grant and a loan of \$51 million.

# Craft fair planned in Logan

The 37th annual Hansen Arts and Crafts Fair will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 18, at the Hansen Plaza Square in Logan.

Gary Keenan, a chain-saw artist, will be working at 8 and 10 a.m., noon and 2:30 p.m. Drawings will be held at 11:45 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. for two of his carvings.

An antique tractor show and variety motorcycle show is planned by the Logan Historical Museum and "The Science of Super Croc" exhibition will be on display at the museum gallery.

For details, call Shirley Henrickson at (785) 689-4846 or go to www.hansenmuseum.org.

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