

Hospital clinic continues to grow

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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After five months in business, the Decatur Health Systems Family Practice Clinic at the Decatur County Hospital continues to serve more patients each month.

In its first full month of service, October, the clinic staff saw 118 patients, said Administrator Lynn Doeden. In November, there were 148 patients, December 177 and approximately 219 in January.

"Expanding evening hours on Tuesday,"

she said, "has provided convenience for many patients who were not able to visit during regular hours."

She said the clinic plans to introduce early morning walk-ins and scheduled hours in March. The clinic will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Dr. Leslie Daly, who was hired in September and Robin Williamson, a physician assistant who started in November, continue to see patients, she said.

Dr. Daly was hired on a temporary basis,

said Mrs. Doeden, adding that she knows he will be here at least until the end of March.

She and the hospital board, said Mrs. Doeden, have continued aggressive recruiting for doctors to staff the clinic. She said they are in contact with four family-practice physicians and two have scheduled visits here.

Besides seeing patients in the Family Practice Clinic, Dr. Daly and Ms. Williamson see patients who come into the hospital

emergency room, along with Dr. Stelian Andrecu and Dr. Elizabeth Sliter of the private Oberlin Medical Arts Clinic.

Mrs. Doeden said she received an e-mail from administrator Barb Whitney which said that the clinic is open for business and neither of the doctors has given a 30-day notice. The same email stated that Oberlin Medical Arts isn't continuing their Atwood Clinic lease and is no longer staffing the clinic in Jennings.

Mrs. Whitney was called Monday for fur-

ther information, but didn't return calls.

Mrs. Doeden said she sent a letter out Friday to the Decatur Health Systems staff letting them know what's going on with the hospital's clinic.

She added in the letter that the hospital's Specialty Clinic continues to grow and add specialists. Patients can see doctors specializing in cancer or heart care, surgery and urinary tract, foot or bone problems.

Utility poles delay fiber for whole city

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Plans to put a fiber-optic telephone and cable system in Oberlin have been delayed after Nex-Tech officials found there isn't enough space on city power poles to safely mount another line.

Jeff Wick, chief operating officer, said he's not sure at this point how long the delay will last. The company plans to work with the city to see if there is a possibility of upgrading the power poles.

At this point there isn't a timeline, said Mr. Wick.

The company had planned to open the office on Main Street by this summer, he said, but that was tied to the overall feasibility of fiber to the town and having all of the services available. The office opening, said Mr. Wick has also been put on hold.

Mr. Wick, chief operating officer for the firm, along with Maggie Ellis, community development representative, and Ron Ellis, director of operations, gave the City Council the "disappointing news" at a meeting Thursday.

The company, said Mr. Wick, has run into an obstacle in getting the five-year project finished on time. The main problem, he said, is a clearance issue with the utility poles.

He said they met with City Administrator Karen Larson and Foreman Dan Castle. Mr. Wick added that Mr. Castle said he wasn't surprised about the problem.

Mr. Wick said that doesn't mean the the poles in Oberlin are shorter than in other cities, but the poles have a number of utilities already on them. Many poles carry power, telephone and cable lines already.

If Nex-Tech goes below the lowest existing line on the poles, he said, its line wouldn't be high enough for truck clearance. If the company puts the wire above the highest line, it doesn't meet the safety requirements of national codes.

He said he offered to have the company's economic development person work with Mrs. Larson on grants for replacing the utility poles.

Mr. Wick said they were planning on putting a "Wimax" system in so that the rural area could have wireless Internet. He said they hope to do that in Oberlin, too, and it could be a stopgap service until the fiber is in.

Mr. Wick said he didn't want to just send out a press release about this, but wanted to convey his deepest apologies to the city about the delay. He added that he knows that people in Oberlin will be disappointed, as is the company.

Mrs. Larson asked if they could bury the lines.

While that is a possibility, said Mr. Wick, it would cost substantially more. Nex-Tech does always bury the fiber ring around the community, which then connects Oberlin to others, he said.

Is there any way to get fiber to the downtown area and businesses on (See CITY on Page 12A)

It's a wrap



AT THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH on Sunday, Dakota Soderlund helped wrap sandwiches the youth group sold and then delivered before the Super Bowl. Several

members of the youth group and their parents made cold-cut sandwiches as a fund raiser.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

People asked to watch

Oberlin's mayor and city administrator urged anyone who sees something fishy going on to call the police, noting that several city fire hydrants had been tampered with recently.

At a meeting Thursday, City Administrator Karen Larson said the water department spent the weekend working on a hole 14 to 17 feet deep and about the size of the city offices after someone tampered with a fire hydrant at Waldo and Commercial, on the west side of town.

David Sporn, a department employee, had just got his feet unstuck from the saturated ground when a wall fell in, she said, so things could have been a lot worse.

Tampering with a hydrant is something that shouldn't be taken lightly, said Mrs. Larson. It caused the city a lot of grief.

Hopefully, she said, people will start paying attention to what's going on and if they see something, call 911.

Councilman Rob McFee asked how long the hydrant had been open. Department head Willard Perrin said he wasn't sure.

A water main behind the hydrant broke and the water from the two washed out a cavity under the road.

(See RUNNING on Page 12A)

Couple keeps love at first sight

By **MARY LOU OLSON**
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It was love at first sight for Richard Pauls when he first laid eyes on Elizabeth Ann Schlageck, a country girl from Selden, at a ball game in Rexford.

"But," his wife added, "later when my parents, Herman and Ellen (Huber) Schlageck, took me to a dance at the old Kaus Hall in Selden, Dick went to my mother and asked if he could take me home. He wasn't very stable on his feet, so my mother said 'No!'"

"However he never gave up, and we started dating in the fall of 1946 after he returned home after serving in World War II."

Their first date was to the Selden Centennial celebration, where the Commercial Club auctioned off a car to Don and Ellen Shaw, she recalled.

"When I grew up, entertainment was going to dances," she said.

"However, I was forbidden by my parents to go to the Old Bohemian Hall. When Dick asked me to go there for a dance, I decided to go. However, I found out when I got home that through the old country 'party line' phone, a neighbor had informed my mother that we were there."

"Boy, did I get heck when I got home, and we never went there again."

After Mrs. Pauls graduated from high school at 16, she worked at the telephone office in Selden for 25 cents an hour and rented a house from her great-aunt, Anna B. Schlageck, for \$22.50 a month.

Mr. Pauls graduated from Selden Rural High School in 1944, then



WEDDING VOWS WERE EXCHANGED by Richard Pauls and Betty Schlageck on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, 1948, at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Selden, just four days after the Big Blizzard of 1948.

was drafted into the U.S. Army. He served in the infantry in the Philippines, Luzon, Manila and Japan before he returned home in November 1946.

"When we were dating, I always had something made for him to eat

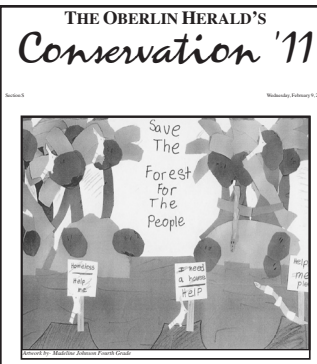
when he came," Mrs. Pauls said. "I always tell him that it was my cooking that 'trapped' him."

"When Dick decided to ask my parents if he could marry me, he was peeling an orange and (See MAN on Page 12A)

Conservation winners in section

Each year, Decatur County farm families are honored for their work with the land. In today's Oberlin Herald is the annual Conservation Section, which has stories about five families that received the Kansas Bankers Awards this year.

Two families received the Rangeland award, one the Windbreak award, one the Water Quality award and one the Soil Conservation award.



Voters have a week to register for primary

Anyone in the City of Oberlin who wants to vote in the upcoming primary for mayor has until 9 p.m. Monday to register with the county clerk.

The clerk's office on the second floor of the Decatur County Courthouse will stay open until 9 p.m. that night so that people who haven't registered or who have moved or changed their name can register.

The Oberlin mayor's race is the only vote that will be on the primary ballot on Tuesday, March 1. The

Gateway will be open that day for voters to take their pick.

Four people have filed for the mayor's seat including City Council members Bill Riedel and Rhonda May, Judy Scott, who works at the hospital and is a former council member, and Bobbi Jo Johnson, who is a mother.

During the primary, voters will narrow the candidate field to two for the general election on Tuesday, April 5.

Candidate forum Feb. 23

The Decatur Professional Women plan to hold a candidate forum for the four people running for mayor of Oberlin at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23, in the upstairs meeting room at The Gateway.

The candidates are Bill Riedel, Rhonda May, Bobbi Jo Johnson and Judy Scott. The club will give each a chance to answer every question.

The primary election will be held the following Tuesday, March 1.



Man saw future wife at ball game

(Continued from Page 1A) the juice was running down his arm the whole time, he was so nervous.

"After they gave their permission, he asked me to go downstairs at the store, which was the funeral home.

"How romantic, I thought, receiving my diamond in the funeral home.

"When my uncle called, my Dad said, 'Buck, he's going to marry her; he's nothing but a darn cradle robber!'

"Since I was only 17, we could not get married without Dad going to the courthouse in Hoxie to sign.

"After the wedding date was set, my whole family went to Lincoln, Neb., to get my dress, which we purchased at the Gold Department Store.

"We were married on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25, 1948, four days after the Big Blizzard of 1948. We had to go through a pasture to get to Selden.

"We were married in the morning by Father Cronin at the Sacred Heart Church in Selden. Our attendants were Dick's sisters, Pauline, Etta Mae and Lavina; my brother, John B. Schlageck, and John Sulzman and John Rogers.

"After the wedding, we went to McCook for pictures, then came



STILLSWEETHEARTS after over 62 years of marriage, Dick and Betty Pauls have spent all of their married life in Selden, where they own Pauls Furniture Store and Pauls Funeral Home.

back and had a big meal at Dick's family's home, followed by a dance at Kaus Hall. One young man even came to the dance on a horse.

"Dick was a substitute mail carrier at the time, so he had to carry mail the next day. I got up and cooked his breakfast - no honey-

moon - and am still doing it!

"Our son Rick, of Oberlin, is the third generation at Pauls Funeral Home. When my father-in-law started the funeral business, he was not required to have a license. Dick was on the road to going to school to get one when he suffered a heart attack, so he never did go,

but he and I are both licensed funeral directors."

Mrs. Pauls is 82 and her husband will be 85 in November. He is the only one still living from a family of eight sisters and one brother.

"We both have always enjoyed our work, both in the funeral business and furniture store," she said. "We spend every day there (our second home) and are assisted by our son-in-law, Boyd Wilson of Oberlin.

"We have had a good marriage and were blessed with five children, Margee and husband, Boyd Wilson; Janella and husband, Daniel Benoit; Jaclyn and husband, Daniel Schriener; and Rick and wife, Dori, and their families.

"We lost our son Jeff in 1976 in a car accident," said Mrs. Pauls. "That is something you learn to live with, but it's not easy. However, we are not alone. It happens every day of life.

"We have a close family. We are grateful for the 62-plus years we have been together. They were good years and I'm proud to be the wife of a World War II veteran."

*City utility poles don't have room

(Continued from Page 1A) the highway? asked Mrs. Larson. Mr. Wick said that is something that could be discussed.

The fiber, said Mr. Wick, hasn't been brought in yet, but the conduit has been buried. This spring the fiber will be brought to Oberlin from Norcatu.

The company buried all of the fiber in Norcatu, he said, but it's a smaller town.

Mr. Ellis said they drove 40 to 50 blocks of Oberlin to look at the poles and found a small span that was useable, but on the majority of the poles there are height issues.

So is the solution to get rid of a current utility off the poles, asked Councilman Bill Riedel, or get taller

poles throughout the city? The company is going to go ahead and run the fiber ring through town, said Mr. Wick.

"We aren't saying that the project is over," he added.

There's been a pole every 10 blocks or so, said Mr. Ellis, but not like this. He added that it's not necessarily that the poles in Oberlin are shorter. A lot of the older poles were originally telephone poles with additions. Nex-Tech isn't here to make fun of Oberlin's infrastructure, said Mr. Ellis, just saying the company can't put the new line on and meet the code.

This is a real disappointment, said Ms. May, as council members nodded their heads in agreement.

*Running hydrant causes sinkhole

(Continued from Page 1A) Councilman Bill Riedel added that he thought two other hydrants had been tampered with.

The hydrant that caused the leak, said Mayor Joe Stanley, was turned on just enough to bubble. It cost the city, which means the water users, thousands of dollars in repairs and overtime.

If someone is caught, he said, they could be sentenced to a year in the county jail and fined up to \$2,500. And be forced to pay restitution

for the damage, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch.

When the hydrant fills up and it's cold enough to freeze, said Mayor Stanley, then it won't work. Firemen could be left without water near a burning house.

"If the hydrant is around your house, you want it to work," he said. "We need to get this stopped. If you see someone messing with the hydrants that shouldn't be, please call the cops."

Oberlin receives clean audit rating for 2009

The Oberlin City Council approved the 2009 audit Thursday after the auditor went through it with them page by page.

Brian Thompson, with the Norton firm of Mapes and Miller, said he could report that the city's 2009 audit included a clean report.

At the end of the report, Mr. Thompson briefly went over a letter about the audit with the council. While the auditors don't generally

check the city's internal control system, he said, they did find several months in 2009 where no bank reconciliation had been done. That affects several classes of expenses and income, he said.

Administrator Karen Larson said she's not sure why the auditor said the bank reconciliations weren't being done since Patti Skubal, former treasurer, was getting them done. Currently Jan Elliott does

them and then Mrs. Larson goes over the reconciliations.

Since then, he said, the people in the city office have been doing timely bank reconciliations.

While there weren't any questions about what was in the audit, Councilwoman Rhonda May asked if the city could refinance its general obligation bonds to get a lower interest rate. City Attorney Steve Hirsch said the city could do that.

Currently the city has \$748,533 in two general obligation bond issues at interest rates of 4 percent and 4.25 percent. The city also has a revenue bond issue of \$1,109,345 with interest of 2.77 percent. The interest rates now are under 3 percent.

City Administrator Karen Larson said she would look into refunding them.

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