

# Giving it a toot



**DURING A BASKETBALL GAME** Friday night at Decatur Community High School, Kel Grafel (left) and Joe Hirsch played with the band. — Photo by Susan May

# Council OKs 'free' property

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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 The Oberlin City Council agreed Thursday to move forward with a new program called Adopt-a-Property, designed to give blighted properties to people who can get them fixed up and useable.

Jan Ackerman, the city's code enforcement officer, asked for an extension in moving forward on five blighted properties at a council meeting two months ago. Since then, she's worked on coming up with a program to save buildings on the chopping block.

Mrs. Ackerman said she came up with Adopt-a-Property, which would allow out-of-town owners a chance to donate blighted property to people who can offer creative solutions to get it useable again. Money for the projects, she said, could come through capital grants and loans.

This program, she said, would save the landfill from having to take debris from demolition and it will save the city tax dollars to pay for the demolition.

The program, said Mrs. Ackerman, needs to have strict guidelines. The new owner would have to pay the back taxes, clean up the yard within the first 30 days, sign an agreement to work with the code enforcement officer, grant writers and lenders to come up with a plan for the property.

If the property needs to be painted, she said, it would have to be done in six months.

While she has been in contact with owners of five blighted properties, Mrs. Ackerman said, she's found three so far for whom this program might work.

The property would first be deeded to the city and then to the new owners, she said.

The first property is at 110 S. York. The current owners said they would donate it to the program.

Mrs. Ackerman said she has two people interested in taking over the property.

The next one is 608 N. Neill. The person interested in the property has proposed using it as a storage unit to begin with and turning it into a rental property as money becomes available.

The home at 203 E. Hall would also work for the program, Mrs. Ackerman said, though she hasn't looked for someone interested in that property. One idea is that if someone could tear off the east and west additions and replace some windows, it would be a more doable renovation.

That property, said Councilwoman Rhonda May, is supposedly one of the oldest in Oberlin.

Mrs. Ackerman said she can submit a formal request to Norton Correctional Facility to have a work crew come help clean up the properties, but the properties have to be city owned for the work crews to come.

Can the city pick who the properties go to without going through some kind of application process? asked Mayor Joe Stanley. While the city might be able to do that, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, it's not probably a good idea.

The first step would probably be to make a policy about how the properties will be given away, said Councilman Rob McFee. Is it first-come, first-served, or is the city going to draw names out of a hat?

Mayor Stanley said he didn't think it was a good idea to give the properties away without giving anyone interested a chance.

Councilman Bill Riedel said the person's financial ability to do something with the property should be taken into consideration.

The council approved moving ahead with the program. Mrs. Ackerman said she would be back next month with a possible plan.

# Teen for Christ leader goes full time

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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 An Oberlin man has decided to go into full time missionary work with teenagers.

Pastor Doug Mason has resigned this post at Lund Covenant Church, effective the end of this month, to work full-time with Teens for Christ. Mr. Mason said being full-time with the teen organization means that as of the beginning of March he will be a missionary.

Each full-time person with the group, he said, has to raise their own support.

Teens for Christ, said Mr. Mason, provides youth ministry in rural northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska towns. In many of the towns, churches aren't able to provide youth ministry and Teens for Christ is the youth group.

Mr. Mason isn't new to Teens for Christ. He and his wife Johanna have been in charge of the

Oberlin group for almost six years, and he has been involved with the organization for 15 years and youth ministry for 30.

He said when he moved here, he still wanted to preach, so someone from Teens for Christ contacted Lund Covenant Church. The church had an interim pastor at the time.

More and more of his time, said Mr. Mason, is spent helping teenagers and their parents with issues kids face. He said that's where he feels God has been opening the doors for him in his ministry.

He said he thinks Lund Covenant will be able to find another person to

preach and take care of the pastoral ministry.

Mr. Mason said his strong desire is evangelism and making disciples. He said he wants to help people have a relationship with God.

He is still raising money for a used 15-passenger van for the organization. They have \$7,500 raised so far, he said, and he thinks they will need another \$2,500.

People can make donations to him at 806 E. Jackson or to the the Teens for Christ area office at 662 Seventh St., Phillipsburg, Kan. 67661.



Doug Mason

# Dues approved to continue recycling

The Decatur County commissioners approved 2011 dues to the Northwest Kansas Recycling Organization, based in Colby, which handles recycling for eight counties.

At their meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 25, commissioners had questioned why the U.S. Census numbers from 2000 instead of 2010 were used to

figure the dues, but they learned that the numbers aren't yet available. The organization plans to use the 2010 numbers next year, said County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler.

The county pays \$4 per person. The dues are broken down to \$2 per person for \$6,944, which is what was just paid, then \$1 per person in July and October for each bill,

or \$3,472.

Besides paying the dues for this year, the commissioners approved buying another baler for the operation for \$1.

Noxious Weed Control Director Gaylen Huntley said the county recycled 94 tons last year. With two balers, he said, they could take two less trips a week to the regional

center in Colby.

Mr. Huntley said he is working on a spot to store the second baler.

On another matter, he told commissioners the department made a homemade sprayer using recycled parts, but found that it hasn't held up as well as the new ones. He said a new one would cost \$400 to \$425.

The commissioners approved the purchase.

He said an inspector from the Kansas Department of Agriculture had been here for a visit. The department passed.

# Council to discuss cemetery rules

The Oberlin City Council plans to hold a special meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday to discuss policies at the Oberlin Cemetery.

Administrator Karen Larson said

the council needs to discuss the policies so that they can all get on the same page. One of the problems at the cemetery, she said, is cremations, where people are trying to

put ashes of 11 or 12 people in the same lot.

Mrs. Larson said the council also plans on talking about Sappa Park and possible grants.

# Oberlin airport meeting will be Thursday

An open meeting to discuss questions about Oberlin's municipal airport has been rescheduled for 1 p.m. Thursday.

The meeting, which was supposed to have been in January, has been cancelled twice because of weather.

Don Klappmeyer, the engineer with BWR who is in charge of plans to rebuild and relocate the main runway, will be at the meeting along with members of the city Airport Committee.

The current plan, required to move the north-south runway away

from the highway and fairgrounds for safety reasons, is not linked to a long-range plan for a 5,500-foot runway to handle larger planes.

The meeting will be in the upstairs meeting room at The Gateway.

## Oberlin Gateway

### Saturday, February 19

#### Dinner theater

6:30 p.m./Steak and Shrimp dinner,

7:30 p.m./Performance

**\$30 per person**

Theater tickets can be purchased at the door for \$10/adults and \$5/students grade 1-12

**This is an Oberlin Arts & Humanities Commission season ticket event. Dinner reservations are needed by Tuesday, Feb. 15.**

For information and/or reservations call Ella 785-475-3557 or Mary 785-470-0218

## Rawlins County Health Center

### RAWLINS COUNTY HEALTH CENTER COMMUNITY CALENDAR

707 Grant Atwood, KS 67730 (785) 626-3211

Bringing Specialized Healthcare To Your Community

## February 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	4 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	5
		6	7	8	9 Dr. Frankum Surgery	10
12	13	14	15	16 Dr. Curtis Cardiology	17 Dr. Saba Orthopedics	18
19	20	21	22 Dr. Frederick C. Miller Cardiology	23	24	25
26	27	28 Dr. Rubinstein Oncology	<b>TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A VISITING PHYSICIAN, PLEASE CALL (785) 626-3211 Cheryl Banister, RN Specialty Clinic Direct</b>			

## valentine's day

february 14

This program is supported in part by the Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.