

Postal Service needs fair shake, not a bailout

The U.S. Postal Service hopes to eliminate 11 Kansas post offices among about 2,000 facing the ax across the nation.

Most are small towns where the postmaster has died, left or retired, leaving the job vacant. None is in the immediate area of northwest Kansas, though that doesn't mean we might not continue to lose post offices. Several have closed in recent years, and we have others that do not make money.

The Postal Service is desperate, facing an \$8 billion deficit this year. Mail volume is dropping, competition growing and the service is running out of cash. The mail service still makes a profit, oddly enough, but somewhere along the line actuaries misfigured its payment to the federal pension fund.

The fund is said to owe the Postal Service something like \$70 billion, and the overpayment continues at the rate of \$10 billion a year. This has been going on for years.

Faced with running out of cash, though, the service cannot wait for a sluggish Congress to do the right thing. It's throwing whatever it can find overboard.

So far, the service has proposed moving mail sorting from smaller centers across the country into bigger cities where the post offices supposedly are more efficient. (No one believes that, to start with!) Northwest Kansas

is one victim of this scheme, with mail sorting to be moved from Colby and Hays to Salina.

Closing post offices where the job is vacant is another initiative. Closing offices where two facilities are close and one could serve the entire area is another. And the service has asked to end Saturday delivery of mail.

None of the cuts, not even the total, is enough to "save" the Postal Service. One estimate for the cuts is almost \$1 billion of the \$8 billion savings needed.

Congress will have to step in to save mail service, and that is being cast as "yet another federal bailout." In truth, the government has been dipping into the service's budget to reduce the deficit, and Congress is reluctant to act because it can spend this money elsewhere.

The Postal Service does not need a bailout. It needs fair treatment and common sense, but those are in short supply in Washington.

By fall, we should know if the mail is something American needs, or if we can do without it. That is not a pleasant prospect, however.

Congress should act now to end the overpayments and to either refund past overages to the postal budget or allow the service a credit on pension payments. Before the service goes broke, not after.

— Steve Haynes

City needs to oil the streets

The Oberlin City Council may have to choose between rebuilding some streets or preserving what it has.

Rebuilding the streets, while a necessity, will take decades. In that time, if the city does not act to stabilize and preserve what it has, the existing oiled streets will break up and return to dirt.

The city simply has to seal those old streets. We will need most of them for years to come.

Until a couple of years ago, the city sealed its streets every third year. It did half the streets one year, half the next and saved up the money the third year. As the price of oil rose, council members put off the sealing.

At the same time, an engineering report said many streets were just layers of oil built up over dirt, with no base under the "pavement." Others, of course, are concrete or brick

and concrete. A precious few have adequate, modern asphalt.

Later, a plan to rebuild a few blocks of pavement at a time arose. That's a good idea, but it doesn't replace sealing the old asphalt streets, many of which are not in that bad a shape.

While the engineers said they found mostly dirt under the surface, for instance, when the city tore out the intersection at Hall and Beaver to replace old asphalt with concrete, workers found up to eight inches of dense asphalt — not a thin layer over dirt. It was broken up because of poor maintenance, but it was tough to remove.

The city should proceed with a sealing project this year and next to preserve what streets it has, but it also needs to pursue the paving replacement plan. There's no point in delay; we need to do what the money will allow, and do it now. — Steve Haynes

Western Plains budget suffers

To the Editor:

With a stroke of his pen, Gov. Sam Brownback vetoed funding for the Kansas Arts Commission. How does that affect the people of northwest Kansas, you ask?

If you've ever attended a Western Plains Arts Association show in one of our nine corner counties, it was probably paid for partly, in some way, through the Kansas Arts Commission. This state funded agency was the funnel for federal money from the National Endowment for the Arts, regional money from the Mid-America Arts Alliance and state tax money for the Kansas Touring Program.

So immediately, Western Plains lost \$9,000 in state money. The regional money funding is in question, so that left our organization in

Letter to the Editor

a panic as we start our membership drive for the 2011-2012 year. What do we do?

The board decided it was in the best interest of the entire organization to have fewer, larger shows in central locations, rather than so many programs. The board regrets, that for this year at least, the outlying communities will probably not be able to host a show — either because of demanding technical requirements by the larger shows, or low attendance in the past.

Gov. Brownback's vision is that the arts will be supported by private donations. Whether that is possible or practical remains to be

seen. We do hope that our citizens of northwest Kansas will step up to the plate and support the arts as never before.

Please support Western Plains with a sponsorship this year if you possibly can. Individual memberships are great, but it takes the higher levels of support to bring quality programs here. Contact your representative before July 10 if you can help out at the sponsor level or above. Thanks so much for all your past and future support.

Leona Dickman, secretary
Western Plains Arts Association
Grinnell



Warm weather suits her fine

Warm, OK, hot summer days are here, and I'm lovin' it.

Of course, it helps that I have air conditioning in home, office and car.

In the mornings, it's usually cool enough to get out and do a little gardening, eat breakfast out on the back deck or read the morning paper under the shade of our pear tree.

In the afternoons, it's time to go inside and work or, on the weekends, take a nap on the sofa.

By nightfall, it's late enough that about the only thing left worth doing is counting the lightning bugs and taking a walk around town.

Ah, summertime — and the livin' is easy. Well, not really, but I sure like it better than winter, when the first task most mornings is shoveling the snow off the porch so that I can find the newspaper. The next task is to clean off the walks so the mailman can get to our door.

Nope, give me summer, when my garden is growing and my cats are spending the day lazing on the back porch.

In fact, I tossed all four of them out on Saturday, even the reclusive Jezabel.

The first three were easy. As



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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each went out the door, I grabbed it and gave it a good brushing. The hair flew everywhere, and the cats loved it.

But, then there was Jez, hiding somewhere upstairs, the hairiest cat of all.

I was lucky. She was reclining on the back of Steve's chair on a red-and-white throw that has gone gray with cat hair.

I whisked her outside and grabbed the wire cat brush. She yowled. She hissed. She tried to bite me. She loved every minute of it.

Jez is one weird cat.

Soon, I had to clean the brush, and again, and again and again. I got more hair off of that cat than I had gotten off of the other three combined.

Jez is youngest daughter's cat. We inherited her when husband Brad,

who is allergic to cats, came into the picture. But this isn't the first time we have provided board and back of chair of this fur ball.

Last time, Steve was petting her. As he petted, his hands came away with huge chunks of hair. He carefully put the hair in a pile, packed it up and mailed it to youngest daughter with a note saying that he was sending her a complete cat, "some assembly required."

"You are soooo weird, Daddy," was her reply.

This time, I just threw the extra cat hair away. Brad isn't going anywhere and neither is the feisty Jez.

So last weekend, I was brushing cats, pulling weeds and counting lightning bugs.

It's summertime and the living is wonderful.

Is that me comin' or goin'?

I was beginning to think my calendar looked pretty clear this week, and Lord knows, I need to be staying home and taking care of business.

We have been on a dead-run lately. Sometimes we get home just in time to run through the shower, change and head back out. We meet ourselves coming and going.

The house is out of control; weeds are running rampant and flowers need to be planted. But just when I thought I might have a few days at home to get on top of things, life goes and gets in the way. Jim needs help setting up a shed for a customer; a committee I serve on requires a meeting; another committee needs a phone conference; a fund-raiser for the house we help operate for inmates' families needs planning; and we have company coming over the Fourth of July. So, there goes the week.

Saturday we went to the wedding of a young woman whom we've known since she was in junior high.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
quality-pro@webtv.net

What a beautiful bride she was. Brides are supposed to beam on their wedding day, and Jessica had on a 100-watt smile.

She was overcome by emotion during the ceremony, with tears of joy streaming down her face. Her groom, Henry, lovingly, reached out to her and wiped her tears away. It was a tender moment that brought tears to everyone's eyes.

Do you ever wonder what out-of-staters think when they drive through this country? Do they understand the magnitude of what a wheat harvest means? Do they ap-

preciate the beauty of the land? Do they know what good people live and work here? I hope so.

I've made a prediction that harvest will begin this week in our area. Every field looks ripe and custom cutters are starting to circle. It's close ... very close.

A young couple from our church was having Sunday lunch at a table next to ours. I asked how old the baby was. Then I asked how old their other son was. Not waiting for his mother to reply, he piped up, "I'm big and a half!"

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers of *The Oberlin Herald*:

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From the Bible

Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. Proverbs 8: 6-9

Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like.