

County updates bridge agreement

The Decatur County commissioners signed a supplemental agreement last Tuesday for a new bridge just west of Lyle that went over budget.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman said with a federal aid bridge, the government allows so many working days. On this bridge, he said, several half days of bad weather put the contractor over the amount of work days in the agreement, increasing the cost by \$7,235.

Mr. Stallman said the county is responsible for 20 percent of that, with the federal government picking up the other 80 percent. The county's share is \$1,427.

The county won't actually have to spend any extra money, said Mr.

Stallman, because the original construction bill was less than estimated and technically, the county has already paid for the overage.

Mr. Stallman said the road and bridge crew got out around 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3, clearing snow at the airport, the hospital and off the county roads. The crews were out for six hours, he said.

On Sunday, he said, the crew went back out at 6:30 a.m. and worked until 6:30 p.m. on the county and township roads. Last Monday, said Mr. Stallman, they just finished up some clean up work.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved a transfer of \$5,000 to the transportation bus fund from the general fund.

Health insurance to remain the same

The Decatur County commissioners approved renewing the county's health insurance plan with an increase of 1.74 percent, with the county absorbing the increased cost if it's less than \$10 a month.

Randy Dicks, the county's insurance representative, said at the meeting Nov. 22 that the policy with Corporate Plan includes a separate dental plan and prescription drug card. The county has excellent health insurance, he said.

With some good years for claims, said Mr. Dicks, the increase is low. Corporate Plan, he said, had come in with the lowest rate when the county took bids.

It's up to the commissioners if

they want employees to pay the increase, he said, or just let the county absorb it.

The commissioners didn't say how much the increase would cost for each employee, and no decision was made on who would pay.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy commented that he didn't want the county's reserves to get too thin.

At the meeting last Tuesday, the commissioners discussed the insurance plan again. They agreed to have County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler find out what the increase would be for each employee, and if it's under \$10, then the county would absorb the cost.

Council updates 'nuisance' rules

The Oberlin City Council approved changes to the ordinance on "nuisance" property, taking some of the guesswork out of how complaints are to be made on properties in town and who can make them.

In November, the council held a work session to discuss the ordinance and any changes that might be needed.

Before approving the updated section at the meeting Thursday, Dec. 1, the council agreed to take out a sentence that gave the code enforcement officer permission to make an inquiry and inspection

when observing "conditions which appear to constitute a nuisance."

With the change, complaints have to be in writing and list specifics, members said. The complaints have to be signed by two or more city residents age 18 or older.

After the code enforcement officer receives a complaint, said council members, she can make a written report of her findings.

The changes to the ordinance were approved by all council members present, but Josh Williby and Fonda Farr missed that part of the meeting.

Hospital still looking for doctors, assistants

The Decatur County Hospital administrator and the doctor procurement committee are still looking for midlevel providers, such as a nurse practitioner or a physician assistant, and doctors to work at the hospital and its Family Practice Clinic.

Physician assistant Robin Williamson, who started with the clinic a year ago, had resigned, effective Sunday, Jan. 1. After that day, she

will no longer be working at either the clinic or the hospital.

Administrator Lynn Doeden said she is interviewing candidates this week. On Monday, she and the committee interviewed a doctor from Kansas, who is interested in the job but doesn't have a state license yet.

Mrs. Doeden said two more interviews are scheduled for this week.

Commissioners OK 10 official holidays

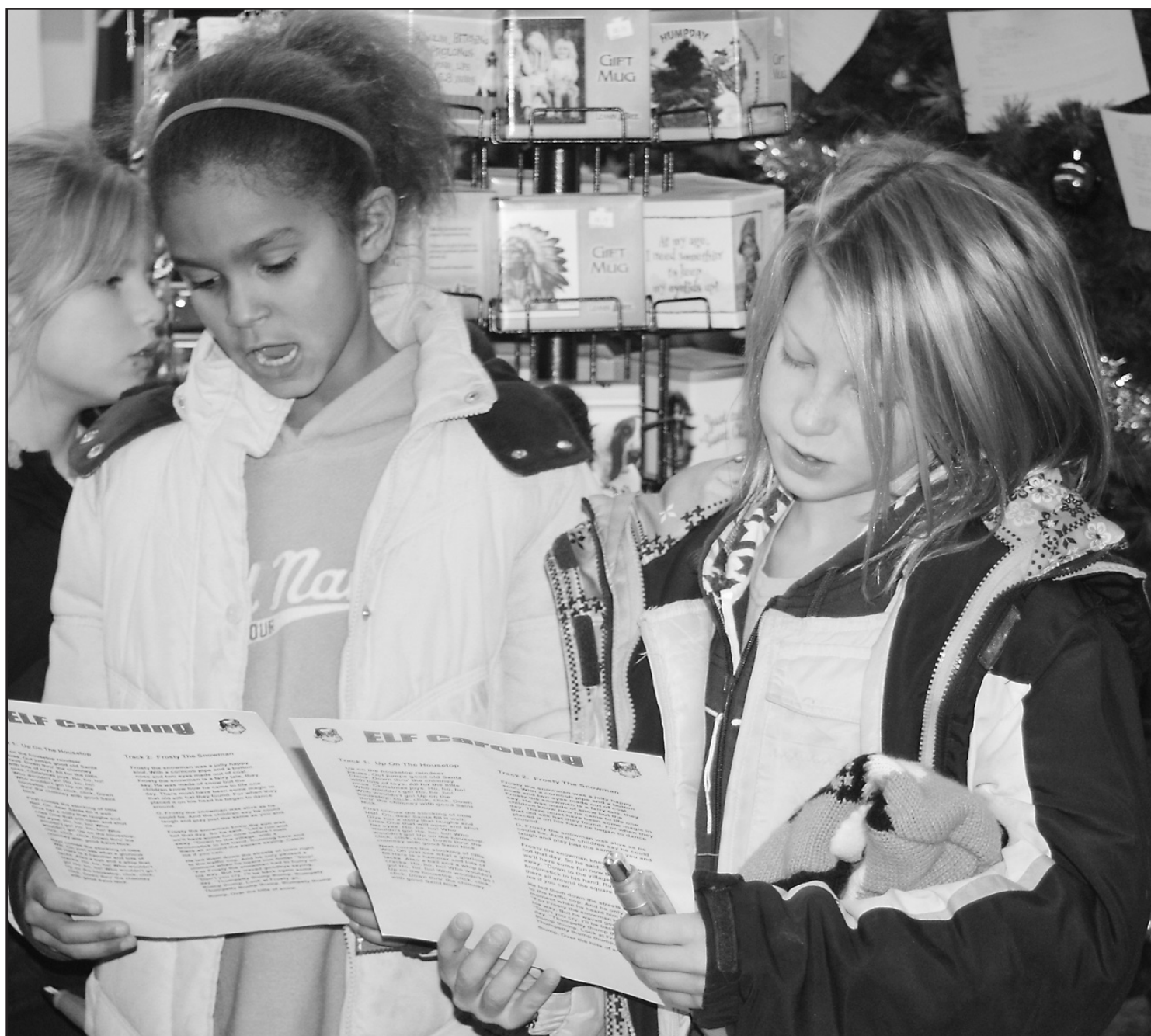
The Decatur County commissioners approved 10 days the county will be closed in 2012.

Last Tuesday, the commissioners briefly discussed the proposed schedule before approving it.

Days the county will be closed in 2012 include:

- Monday, Jan. 2, for New Year's Day.
- Monday, Feb. 20, for President's Day.
- Monday, May 28, for Memorial Day.
- Wednesday, July 4, for Independence Day.
- Monday, Sept. 3, for Labor Day.
- Friday, Nov. 12, for Veterans Day.
- Thursday and Friday, Nov. 22 and 23, for Thanksgiving.
- Monday, Dec. 24, and Tuesday, Dec. 25, for Christmas.

Here we come a caroling



Students carol in stores

ON MAIN STREET last Wednesday, students from Oberlin Elementary School went caroling in businesses. Alyssa Van Vleet (above, left) and Breckyn Jensen sang in the Rocking R. Grady Lohofener (left, at left) and Kel Grafel shared music while they sang at the Chamber of Commerce office.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Ranking dates for conservation initiatives set

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced ranking dates for the On-Farm Energy, Organic and Seasonal High Tunnel conservation initiatives, which offer assistance through the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The initiatives are part of the Department of Agriculture's Environmental Improvement Program. For information, go to the agency's website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip.

"Producers tell us they want

to apply for these initiatives, but many want more time to make sure they choose the one that's right for their operation," the secretary said. "Moving to multiple ranking dates for each initiative is going to make it easier for more to apply."

He said the service accepts applications all year, but plans to rank them three times a year. For the Organic, On-Farm Energy and Seasonal High Tunnel initiatives, periods will end on Feb. 3, March 30 and June 1. At the end of each period, the agency ranks all propos-

als, then notifies all applicants of the results and begins developing contracts with successful applicants.

The three initiatives are available in all states. The Air Quality Initiative is not available here:

On-Farm Energy Initiative: the service works with farmers to develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans or audits. Each plan has landscape and farm headquarters components.

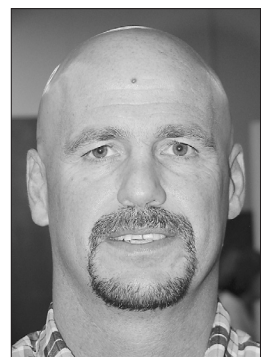
Organic Initiative: the service helps certified organic growers and those working to achieve organic

certification to install conservation practices.

Seasonal High Tunnel Pilot Initiative: the service helps operators plan and implement high tunnels, steel-framed, polyethylene-covered structures that extend the growing season. Benefits include better soil quality, fewer nutrients and pesticides and better air quality.

Visit the website www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/home and look for "EQIP" for information, or call the service's county office, 475-3131.

Shaw Aerial Spraying welcomes Scott Gawith



Shaw Aerial spraying is pleased to announce that *Scott Gawith* has joined our Agro-Culture liquid fertilizer team.

Lock in your fertilizer prices today with financing available and ask about our on the farm delivery.

Call Scott today for all of your liquid fertilizer needs at (785) 953-0707.

"It is with a heartfelt deep sense of gratitude that I say thank-you to each of you for entrusting me with the privilege of serving you this past year. You will remain in my heart for a very, very long time."

Robin Williamson, PA-C

