

Crowd asks about health care here

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Around 60 people attended the Decatur County Hospital Board's monthly meeting last Monday to talk about doctor procurement, complain some and comment on the care received at the facility.

Some of the comments about the hospital and its leadership drew a passionate defense from the board's chair.

Board Chairman Gary Walter said they would skip to the public comment time normally scheduled later in the meeting and take comments right away. Board meetings,

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normally held in the board room, not the lobby, don't draw a crowd.

Mr. Walter said the board had a tape recorder going and asked anyone making a comment to please stand and state their name.

With two new board members, Ruth Wolfram and Norbert Zander, starting that night, said Mr. Walter, he doubted there would be much debate. If a question can be answered in a sentence or two, he said, it would

be. Otherwise, he said, he would get together with Administrator Lynn Doeden to get an answer.

Rusty Addleman, a pharmacist and city councilman, said he represented a group at the meeting. He said he had some general comments from discussions with a number of people. He said the comments weren't supposed to be "bashing or negative."

One comment, he said, has been

about the continuity of care, with the hospital losing six doctors and "midlevel" providers in the past year and a half.

The present providers have been here less than a year, he said, and that hurts continuity.

The majority of the population is elderly and they can't be traveling to get care. Mr. Addleman said, the continuity issue affects people at the town's two nursing homes as well as the rest of us.

What about the level of care? he asked. Does the emergency room have 24-hour coverage with medical staff that can treat someone, let's

say if they are having a heart attack? Mr. Addleman said he questioned whether a person would get the same level of care they got 10 years ago. He added that he knows the hospital has a good nursing staff and support team.

Some people are going out of town for medical care, said Mr. Addleman, and that affects the economy here.

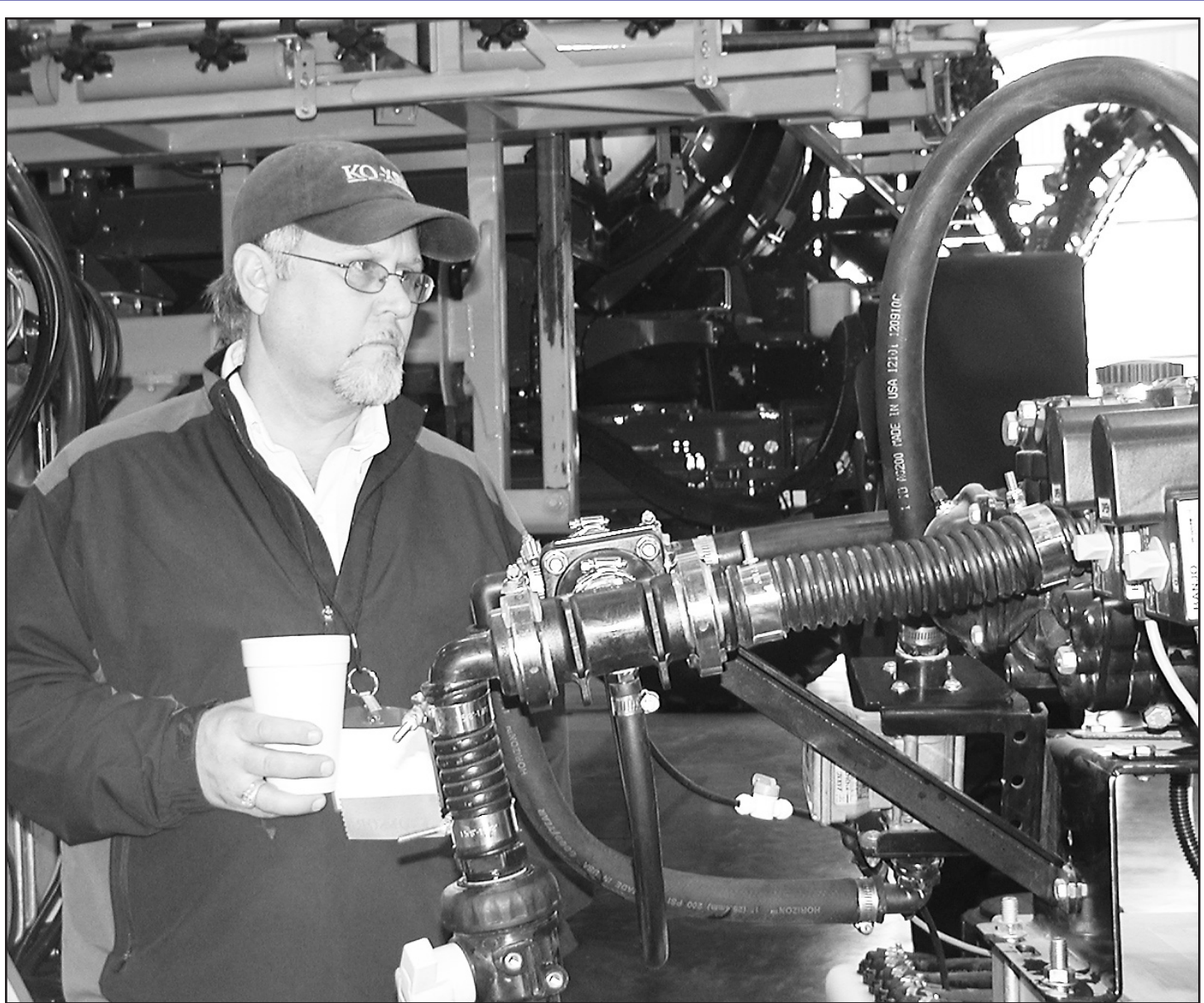
Retirees and people coming to Oberlin looking for a job do look to see whether there is adequate medical care here for their needs, said Mr. Addleman.

Janice Shobe, administrator of the

Decatur County Good Samaritan Center, congratulated the hospital on how many staff members had come to the board meeting. She said she didn't think there was anyone in the room who doesn't want to see the hospital succeed.

People should be attending these meetings, she said. There should be a level of transparency so that the community knows what is happening. Maybe, said Mrs. Shobe, the board could get something in The Oberlin Herald, like what the Oberlin Rotary Club does.

Oberlin Mayor Bill Riedel said (See PEOPLE on Page 8A)



SPRAYING SYSTEMS WERE POPULAR at the Cover Your Acres Conference last Tuesday and Wednesday, and Royce Clapp (above) from Culbertson, Neb., with the Kugler Co. checked one out. Greg Lohofener (right)

of Oberlin glanced at his computer screen while sitting at his Market Data booth waiting to talk to prospective customers at the show.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes

Farmers show up to learn

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**
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More than 800 farmers and ranchers attended the annual Cover Your Acres conference at The Gateway last Tuesday and Wednesday.

While Kansas State University Extension agents from all of northwest Kansas and beyond manned the check-in booths in the foyer, every conference room and the Morgan Theatre were full of people learning about the latest in no-till farming, how to preserve moisture, crop rotation, chemicals and fertilizer and farm management.

Meanwhile the arena was stuffed with overflowing vendors and machinery, including a couple of combines and tractors that would hardly fit through the giant double doors on the north side of the building.

The show drew 50 vendors touting everything from spraying equipment to insurance and estate planning, said Jeanne Falk of Colby, an Extension agronomist who helped organize the show.

"We try to put in topics the producers can take out in the field and use ...," Ms. Falk said.

Her records showed that the 800 plus attendees came from 525 operations, she said, mostly from Kansas and Nebraska.

This is the ninth year for the conference, which has always been held at The Gateway.

"This is the facility that we can put this type of conference together in northwest Kansas," Ms. Falk said, noting the many meeting rooms and the arena



for displays. The conference is co-sponsored by Kansas State University Research and Extension and the Northwest Kansas Crop Alliance.

Other conferences are held in Salina and Burlington, Colo., each year, Ms. Falk said, but they are different. The Cover Your Acres conference is the only one that brings in experts from Kansas State, Colorado State University

and University of Nebraska research facilities to talk about what the farmers want to hear.

"The programs are driven by producers," Ms. Falk said. "We meet with groups and see what they want, and pair that with the right specialists from the university to teach."

The conference started as pretty much just no till, she said, but has expanded to include conserva-

tion and how to make money in agriculture.

While many of the vendor displays in the arena were from out of town, Greg Lohofener of Market Data, Vicki Bailey of Decatur County Title and Abstract and Crop Production Services were there to represent the Oberlin business community.

Final OK required on new lake

State officials say final approval of the new lake at Sappa Park, finished about a year ago, needs to be signed off on by the engineers, but city officials say that is already in the works.

City Administrator Karen Larson told members of the Oberlin Convention and Visitor's Bureau last Thursday that the city had received paperwork from the state water engineer saying that the finished lake project hadn't been approved by an engineer.

Steve Zodrow, administrative assistant in the city office, said the city received notices in the middle of December that the state permits to divert water, control how the water flows and other items would expire at the end of the month.

Looking back, he said, the city hired the Kansas Watershed Institute back in 2007 or 2008 to engineer the project. The contract included a \$6,000 payment up front and a \$6,000 payment when the final inspections were made.

Somewhere along the way, he

said, the final inspection was never done. Mr. Zodrow said he and Mrs. Larson had met with Rick Pauls, with Pheasants Forever, to work on getting the final inspection taken care of.

Mr. Pauls said he talked with the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Services office in Hays about someone doing the final inspection, and they are going to call the Kansas Watershed Institute and get it worked out.

With someone else doing the inspection, said Mr. Zodrow, the Institute will lower the contract cost by \$3,100.

The money for the contract would come out of the special parks fund, said Mrs. Larson, which had \$13,326 in it at the end of the year. She added that she doesn't know of any money being spent out of that fund since then.

That is the same account where money for new bathrooms at the park or playground equipment at City Park would come from, she said.

City gives raises for most employees

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**
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All full-time Oberlin city employees received a 3 percent raise last week and some people will get a bit more.

City Administrator Karen Larson said that on her recommendation, the City Council agreed to increase the pay of all full-time employees by 3 percent and give several employees merit raises of 50 cents and \$1 per hour.

Besides their 3 percent raises, Sandy Rush, deputy city clerk and treasurer; Administrative Assistant Steve Zodrow, Cemetery Sexton Jeremy Tally; and Gateway manager Chris Ward will receive an extra \$1 an hour. David Sporn

with the water department got 50 cents an hour.

Mrs. Rush started low, Mrs. Larson said, but she has done a wonderful job. Mr. Zodrow, an experienced accountant, is saving the city a lot of money through his work on street repairs and other grant projects.

Mr. Ward will become the Gateway manager and Mr. Tally will take on the parks management along with the cemetery, she said. Mr. Sporn is taking on increased duties in water and sewer operations.

The 3 percent raises include all full-time workers, she said, including herself and Police Chief Wade Lockhart.

The cost will be \$26,230 a year, she added.

Newspaper needs 'hero' nominations

The Oberlin Herald staff needs nominations for an upcoming "Hometown Heroes" special section.

Reporters will take the nominations and write short stories on each of the nominees, with pictures.

All of the nominations are needed by Wednesday, Feb. 15, to allow time for interviews.

Anyone who wants to nominate someone can mail a letter to Managing Editor Kimberly Davis at 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749 or e-mail the nomination to k.davis@nwkansas.com.

Nominations, said Mrs. Davis, need to include the person's name, the nominator's name and phone number, and the reason for the

nomination. If a picture is available, that can be sent or e-mailed to Mrs. Davis.

The staff will try to write about each of the nominated "Heroes," Mrs. Davis said. A hero can be anyone, she said, maybe someone who has worked hard to raise money for a community project, someone who volunteers to shovel the sidewalk of their neighbor each winter or maybe just that person who always has a smile on their face and constantly cheers people up.

Mrs. Davis asks that people not nominate the same "heroes" as last year.

