

# \*Contestant looking for sponsors

(Continued from Page 1A)  
known as spina bifida, Miss Soderlund has been using a wheelchair most all her life, but she hasn't let it slow her down. She said she has tried to live as normal a life as possible and says her parents, Jim and Penny Soderlund, have always been there to help her achieve her goals.

She said she attended a Jaycees summer camp every year from the time she was 7 until her last year of high school. The camp was held near Augusta, she said, and she could visit with her aunt and uncle, P.J. Fisher and Greg Cox of Wichita. She said they will come watch her compete in the pageant, too.

After graduating from Decatur Community High School in 2007, Miss Soderlund attended Colby Community College.

"The whole college thing didn't work out," she said somewhat jokingly. "My original idea was to live on my own in Oberlin, but the agency I worked with at the time said if I did, I would lose their services. So I had to live in the dorm, and that was a shock. I had to cook and clean and Mom wasn't there to say, 'Time to get up or time to go to school.'"

She said after that school year, she came home for about a month. Then her mother learned about apartments in Oakley. She said they checked out the facility, she liked it and moved in. Miss Soderlund said the management has been helpful; even modifying her bathroom so she can shower unassisted.

Miss Soderlund is the office receptionist at the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center in Oakley. The center provides professional services to school districts in northwest Kansas, including Oberlin. She said she has known some of the employees since she was a baby. One of the therapists wrote a letter of recommendation for her to enter the Miss Wheelchair Kansas pageant.



**JESSICASODERLUND** stopped and talked on her cell phone Monday. Miss Soderlund plans to compete in the Miss Wheelchair Kansas pageant.

— Herald staff photo by Carolyn Plotts

The platform for her to run for the title of Miss Wheelchair Kansas is, "Respect. No pity. Don't need it or want it." That also seems to be Miss Soderlund's motto, one that she will be incorporating into a book she is writing about her life. She said she plans to write about the challenges she faces every day, especially trying to get into and around in public buildings. Her future goals include setting up a program and fund to help others confined to a wheelchair obtain an education.

Like most young people, Miss Soderlund keeps up with friends and family on Facebook. She said she loves to read and enjoys playing solitaire on her computer. Her other main interest is her pekingese dog Toby. She is also a volunteer member of the housing board at the apartment complex where she lives, is interested in the Buffalo Bill statue committee and has volunteered at the Oakley Chamber of Commerce. Three times a week, Miss Soderlund said, her personal

assistant, Pat Lysinger, comes to her home to help with household chores and to help her into a device called a "prone stander" with which Miss Soderlund can be upright and, with Ms. Lysinger's assistance, take Toby for a walk. Miss Soderlund said she would welcome any business or individual that would like to help sponsor her to the state competition and hopefully the national pageant. Donations may be sent to her at 700 W. Fifth St., Apt. 7, Oakley, Kan. 67748.

# Norton officer taking company on deployment

By **KEVIN BOTTRELL**  
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Capt. Scott Weber of Norton says he's excited to be commanding the Kansas Army National Guard's 170th Maintenance Company as it prepares for deployment to southwest Asia.

The 170th is based at the armory in Norton and includes the armory in Colby. Armories in Goodland and Phillipsburg were a part of the unit before they were closed in March 2010. The unit includes people from all over northwest Kansas, but no Oberlin residents right now. Capt. Weber said he was born and raised in Goodland and moved to Norton in 2006 after becoming a full-time Guardsman.

The 170th is about half veteran soldiers who have been deployed before, Weber said, and half younger soldiers. Some were around when the unit was last deployed 20 years ago in Operation Desert Storm.

"The troops are extremely motivated," he said. "That makes it easier from a command perspective."

Weber said 170th had been set for deployment several years ago, but ended up not going overseas. When it was deployed in February 1991, the unit acted in support and maintenance roles for Army units during

the fighting in Kuwait and helped with repair, cleanup and inspection afterward.

This will be Weber's first deployment, something he describes as an exciting prospect.

"It's my turn," he said.

Weber said the 170th has been training for deployment for six to seven months, and it will finish up that training this week.

"The training was good," he said. "We've been on the ranges all weekend. It did get a little cold out there."

The 170th finished weapons qualification last week, then had classroom instruction and field training, which included battle, navigation and radio training. Weber said the last three days of the week were spent running field exercises, which brought together all the various training areas into one combined trial.

After a departure ceremony in Salina on Sunday, the unit was to go to Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg, Miss., for more training before being sent overseas. The 170th will spend about nine months in-country. Weber said they will be set up as an Area Reaction Force, conducting patrols and guarding against threats to American forces.

# Kansas county reports measles

While six cases of measles appeared in Finney County at the end of January, there haven't been any in Decatur County, health officials say.

Health Administrator Marilyn Gamblin said she doesn't remember the last time there was a case of measles here. The health department, at 902 W. Columbia, offers the measles vaccine, she said.

Ms. Gamblin said kids are supposed to get the vaccine when they are 1 and then get a booster when they start kindergarten.

Most insurance companies, including Medicaid, cover the cost for children, she said. For those who can't afford insurance or can't afford the vaccine, a program called Vaccine for Children can help.

It's important, said Ms. Gamblin, to get your kids vaccinated against

the measles. This disease was all but banished years ago and now it's not really seen much. That's because of the vaccine. Some people are pushing for parents' right to choose among vaccines, she said, but the best prevention for these diseases is to get your kids vaccinated.

In Finney County, six cases of measles were reported at the end of January. Four lived in the same house.

A release from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment says, "Measles is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. It causes fever, runny nose, tiredness, cough and a blotchy rash all over the body. Measles is spread through the air by breathing, coughing or sneezing. It is so contagious that any person who is exposed to it and is not immune will probably get the disease."

# Council learns about caretaker's house

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**  
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The Oberlin City Council got a history lesson on one of the buildings at the old ranch at Sappa Park at its last meeting.

Park supporter Gary Anderson brought information to the Feb. 2 meeting about the caretaker's cottage, which has been a topic in the council since Oberlin resident Susan Rynearson asked to be allowed to renovate and live in it several months ago.

The house, in the area used as a youth ranch for many years, has been closed for several years and reportedly suffers from mold and

mildew damage.

The cottage, Mr. Anderson told the council, was completed in 1939 before the park was turned over to the state by the National Park Service.

There are drawings at the Decatur County Museum, he said, which include the blueprints and many interior details, such as bookcases and kitchen cabinets.

The architect for the project was H. Ernest Nichols, the father of Dave and Harold Nichols, Mr. Anderson said.

He told the council that he believes the building may be the only house in the state designed and built

by the National Park Service, which worked on three "stimulus" projects in Kansas in the 1930s - Sappa Park, Old Fort Hays and Meade State Lake.

The Hays project was to stabilize and preserve the fort, he said. The other two were to build lakes and recreation areas. Mr. Anderson said he doesn't believe any original buildings still stand at the Meade site.

That could make the caretaker cottage and the shelter house at Sappa Lake the only historic National Park Service structures in Kansas, he said.

Mr. Anderson urged the council

to make every effort to preserve the cottage, as it could help market the entire park as it is developed with restrooms and camping facilities.

Ms. Rynearson had asked the council to reconsider her request to live in the house and act as caretaker at the park, and to help pay for renovations. She said that she is willing to pay her own utilities and would be willing to take care of the restrooms at the park.

The council decided to see what grants might be available for renovation of the property and possibly have a contractor see what is needed.

# City gives 'exceptional service' increase

City Administrator Karen Larson got a raise from the City Council for "exceptional service" earlier this month.

Mrs. Larson, who has been the city administrator, first acting and then in fact, since June 2010, received a 3 percent raise with other city employees last month.

At its last meeting on Feb. 2, however, the council voted unanimously to raise Mrs. Larson another \$1,500

to \$56,000 to be more in line with others in her job in the state and to recognize the work she has done on the city's many projects.

"It was a well-deserved raise," Councilman Rusty Addleman said.

Mrs. Larson did not get a raise last year, when others on the city payroll did, partly, she said because she felt that others needed the raise and she had received a promotion with a sal-

ary increase the year before.

By comparison, the long-time city administrator in Norton makes \$37.17 an hour or a little over \$72,000 a year, that city reported. The League of Kansas Municipalities reported that city administrators made an average of \$62,802 in 2009.

Mrs. Larson noted that her raise and those of other city employees will be more than covered by a 13 percent decrease in Blue Cross and Blue Shield premiums the city is receiving.

In other business, the council, • Received a request from Mrs. Larson for ideas on who could fill the city's seat on the Economic Development Corp. board.

• Heard that the city should know soon what its insurance company is willing to pay on damages to the

city's electrical transformer, damaged in a fire in December.

• Learned that Administrative Assistant Steve Zodrow will be attending grant-writing classes at McCook Community College this month.

• Heard that Cemetery Sexton Jeremy Tally is still working on reconciling the cemetery records with actual burials and talking to clubs about donating for a digital cemetery directory.

• Learned from Police Chief Wade Lockhart that the city had 21 criminal cases in January. Last year, he said, there were just four.

• Was asked by Mayor Bill Riedel that as many members as possible attend a rural water conference Tuesday through Thursday, March 27 to 29, in Wichita.

# Businesses plan to be closed

The only places closing Monday for President's Day will be the banks, the courthouse and state and federal offices. The only government office open will be the City of Oberlin.

There will be no mail service, and all post offices will be closed.

Oberlin schools had planned to be closed Monday, but with the Re-

gional Wrestling Tournament next week, decided to switch Friday for Monday. Students will have classes Monday and be out of school Friday. Otherwise, all restaurants, medical facilities and offices, Raye's Grocery, convenience stores, the Sunflower Recreation Center and the Oberlin Livestock Auction will be open for business as usual.

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