

## Air traffic returns to runway

The runway and taxiway of the Oberlin airport have been paved, which completes Phase 1 of the airport project – and means the airport is back in business.

An official re-opening will be held at 5 p.m. Thursday, during the Airport Advisory Board's regular meeting, but the runway has been open for about a week or so, said board President Sid Metcalf. He said the board will try to do something special at the meeting.

Phase 1 cost \$2.4 million total, with 95 percent of that being picked up by the Federal Aviation Administration, and the other 5 percent paid for by the city and county. The city paid \$70,000 and the county \$50,000.

Phase 2 of the project, which includes building a new, longer runway, is still pending, Mr. Metcalf said, but could begin next year.

"We'd like to have a little ceremony to officially open the airport,"

said Mr. Metcalf, "nothing grand. We'll discuss Phase 2, as well. We're still gathering information and letters from people to take to the FAA, and we're still planning on going to get some face-to-face time with them. But the government loves paperwork, so we're trying to get as much data as we can to give them. (This includes) letters from air ambulance people, from industries that need facilities for larger airplanes and so forth."

Phase 2 has been controversial, as it will take a whole lot of city and federal money to build the new runway, allowing bigger cargo and commercial aircraft to use the port. For Phase 1, the city and county had to come up with 5 percent of the total cost, but because Congress changed the law governing the grants, the city will have to come up with 10 percent of the total cost, estimated at \$815,858. The total bill could be (See RUNWAY on Page 10A)

## Few businesses to close on Monday

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared Oct. 12 as Columbus Day and made it a federal holiday. Since 1971, however, the day has been observed on the second Monday in October.

Oberlin schools will be closed Monday, not necessarily to observe Columbus Day, but because it is a teacher in-service training day. The district office, however, will be open.

Government offices in the county courthouse, with the exception of the District Court office, will be closed. To contact the clerk of the court, call 475-8107.

City offices in The Gateway will be open.

The U.S. Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Decatur

County Conservation District office will all be closed, along with other state and federal offices. Post offices will be closed for the holiday, and there will be no mail service.

All banking institutions in the county will be closed under federal law.

Downtown businesses, restaurants, Raye's Grocery, convenience stores, Dollar General and the livestock auction will all conduct business as usual. The Sunflower Recreation bowling alley will be open from 5 to 10 p.m.

The Oberlin Herald will maintain its usual schedule with ad and news deadlines of noon Monday. It will be delivered to stores Tuesday afternoon and be in most mail boxes Wednesday.

## Street repairs should be done within a month

The city's street project is moving along, and should be completed over the next 3 to 4 weeks.

"We should pour out the remainder of Elk Street this week, and then it will be about 55 percent done," said Joe Bryant, vice president of Bryant and Bryant Construction out of Halstead, which has a \$484,000 contract for the job.

Mr. Bryant added that his crew has begun to mill off the asphalt for the second phase of the project on Monday. After Elk, they will be working on Columbia Street from U.S. 83 (Buffalo Avenue) to

the hospital, and then Broadway Avenue. Since Columbia is the main street leading to the hospital, and Broadway is near there, Mr. Bryant said there will be detour signs to the north and south of the construction.

To get to the hospital or clinic during construction, people are advised to take Cedar Street from the highway to the hospital, then circle around the building to the parking areas on the north. From neighborhoods west of U.S. 83, take Elk and Cole avenues to Victoria Street, then go west to Chandler Avenue.

## Senator campaigns in downtown Oberlin

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP  
sdecamp@nwkansas.com

Sen. Allen Schmidt, a Hays Democrat running in the 40th District, visited Oberlin last Monday, answering questions and talking politics with a revolving group of about 10 people over lunch at Coffee, Tea and Me on Penn Avenue.

Under redistricting maps drawn by federal judges, Mr. Schmidt is the Democratic candidate in the district, which covers 13 1/2 of the

14 northwest Kansas counties. He had represented District 36 after being appointed to fill the seat of outgoing Sen. Janis Lee, who was appointed as chief hearing officer for the Kansas Court of Appeals in February 2011. His Republican opponent next month is Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, who has represented the 40th District since 2005.

Initially, about 10 area Democrats showed up to talk and have lunch with Sen. Schmidt, who was mildly surprised that no

Republicans came. Later during his visit, Gary and Sarah Orr came in for lunch, but the Republican couple only sat back to listen.

Mr. Schmidt had come through Oberlin the previous weekend for the Antique Engine and Thresher Show. It was there that he met a few people and decided to stop the next time he came through. Beforehand, he said the visit was more an opportunity to see what was on people's minds than to do a cam-

paign call. And that's more or less exactly what he did.

The senator said his priorities are education, rural housing and development, bringing in new businesses and seeing that high schools begin tying in technical study college credits. Ninety percent of technical education graduates, he said, stay in Kansas, and it's an important job sector to facilitate.

"Those tech jobs support the infrastructure of the community," agreed Rick Binder, a youth minister and farmer from Ellis County who came up for the meeting, and a (See SENATOR on Page 10A)



Sen. Schmidt



PRINCIPAL BEN JIMENEZ quieted down the junior and senior classes from Decatur Community High School on Tuesday before they posed for a group photo on the courthouse steps. The kids, at the courthouse for "Government Day," went to learn how every department

of the county affects people's lives. Ambulance volunteer Gaylen Huntley (below) showed the kids the county's new ambulance, and later (bottom photo), the commissioners told them about budgets and county maintenance.

- Herald staff photos by Stephanie DeCamp

## Students study our government

By MEGHAN GAULT  
The Decatur Dictator  
and STEPHANIE DeCAMP  
sdecamp@nwkansas.com

With the students going everywhere from the county courtroom to the sheriff's holding cell on the fourth floor, an outsider might have thought that the whole of Decatur Community High School's junior and senior classes had gotten into some serious trouble last Tuesday.

Fortunately, it was just "Government Day" for the kids, who spent their morning learning about how everyone from county commissioners to the clerk and treasurer affect people's lives.

The day was sponsored by the National Honor Society and planned by several of the group's officers, including Miki Dorshorst, Matthew Helm, Zach May, Kade Brown and Jalyn Shaw.

The students were separated into four groups, each with an adult sponsor. The sponsors were Principal Ben Jimenez, Sarah Fredrickson, government teacher J.D. Johnson and Rhonda May.

The day began at 8:45 a.m. in the courtroom with a discussion led by District Magistrate Judge John Bremer.

"Remember when you came here in the third grade?" Judge Bremer asked in the courtroom. "This will probably be your last pleasant experience in a courtroom."

The judge went on to explain the various reasons people find themselves in courtrooms, from traffic tickets to jury duty, from criminal offenses to civil cases.

There are ways to avoid coming there, he said. First, never ignore certified letters, or any mail at all for that matter, from the courts. There are consequences for ignor-

ing the government. And if you're summoned for jury duty, just suck it up and do your duty.

"If you do get here, you get a fair shake," said Mr. Bremer of his court, telling the kids every citizen should follow news of the courts and those who work in and with them.

How can you expect government to work, he asked, if you're not a good citizen, keeping an eye on them?

"We're expected to know what our elected officials are doing and hold them accountable," Judge Bremer said. "It's just like that with the laws and the courts. That's why freedom of the press is important – if they report that important evidence is being thrown out of a case, for example, you may need to be outraged. It's easy to say 'Oh, let someone else do it,' but it's your responsibility to pay attention to what's happening."

After Judge Bremer spoke, the classes split up into their groups and went to several county offices.

(See YOUTHS on Page 10A)



## Property ordinance on city's plate again

This week's City Council meeting will be a lot like the last one, with updates on street, airport and water projects, but with the bulk of the meeting devoted to discussing the ordinance on blighted property.

"Hopefully, they'll be able to work with whatever (City Attorney) Steve Hirsch has put together," said city administrative assistant Steve Zdroz.

The blighted-property ordi-

nance remains at center stage for the council, as it is considering wiping the whole thing away and replacing it with a more modern version. The current ordinance has been in place since 1968.

Mr. Hirsch said at the last meeting that he would collect ordinances from other Kansas cities for the council to look at. Until then, the council plans to make no more decisions on the ordinance.

