

Federal honor to be given to airport head

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP sdecamp@nwkansas.com
After 65 years of faithful service, Oberlin Municipal Airport manager Bob Fraker is starting to see a lot of appreciation – and gathering in a few honors.

Last month, the city's airport committee named the field after him. Next Thursday, Nov. 15, Mr. Fraker will receive the Charles E. Taylor Master Mechanic award at 6:30 p.m. at The Gateway.

"It's an honor given by the Federal Aviation Administration," she explained, "where a person has to be an airplane mechanic for at least 50 years to receive it."

"I think he's the most professional and ethical person I have ever met," said Councilman Jim Miesner later. "He sure helped form my life. I used to work for him before I went to college. He taught me a lot about life and how to live it right. And in a profession that could easily be done unethically ... he just wouldn't do it. Things had to be right before he would sign off on an inspection or anything like that. He's the original good guy."

Mr. Fraker started working at the airport in 1947. He had earned his pilot's wings in the Navy but then decided to come home. He offered flight instruction, inspection, ambulance and charter work. Today, however, Mr. Fraker just does airplane inspections and works on his two planes in his shop at the airport.

"I have always been fond of flying," he said in October, at the ribbon cutting for the rebuilt runway at the airport. "I enjoy working on them, too. I'm sure I'll be here as long as I'm able. I'm almost 90 now, and probably don't have too many years left where I'll be able. But I'll

be here as long as I can."

In other business, the council: Approved a 20-foot wide utility easement and right-of-way allowing Verizon Wireless to lay fiber-optic lines for a cell tower on the south edge of town. The lines will serve a 4G cell phone service the company is building in this area. City Attorney Steve Hirsch said that Verizon will have to pay property tax on both the tower and the lines. Mrs. Larson added that the company will also be paying a \$400 per month fee for renting the city property for the tower.

• Heard that Lance Harter, of Miller and Associates, the engineering firm out of McCook, will be here on Thursday, Nov. 15, to make a final report on the street project. The council also approved a motion to have Bryant and Bryant Construction, of Halstead, tar the cracks in the intersection of Hall Street and Beaver Avenue.

• Heard that a scheduled meeting for the Sappa Park committee had been canceled. Mrs. Larson said that she had met with the city's insurance representative, however, and found that they would have to have liability insurance in order to rent the caretaker's house out. She said that no decision has been made on whether to pursue the idea.

• Heard that the final inspection for Phase I of the airport runway project will be Tuesday, Nov. 13.

• Heard from City Foreman Dan Castle that the loaned transformer has been removed and the city's refurbished one is now in place. With any luck, he said, the changeover will be done in two to three weeks. The city's transformer was damaged in a fire caused by a raccoon Dec. 19.

County to receive raises

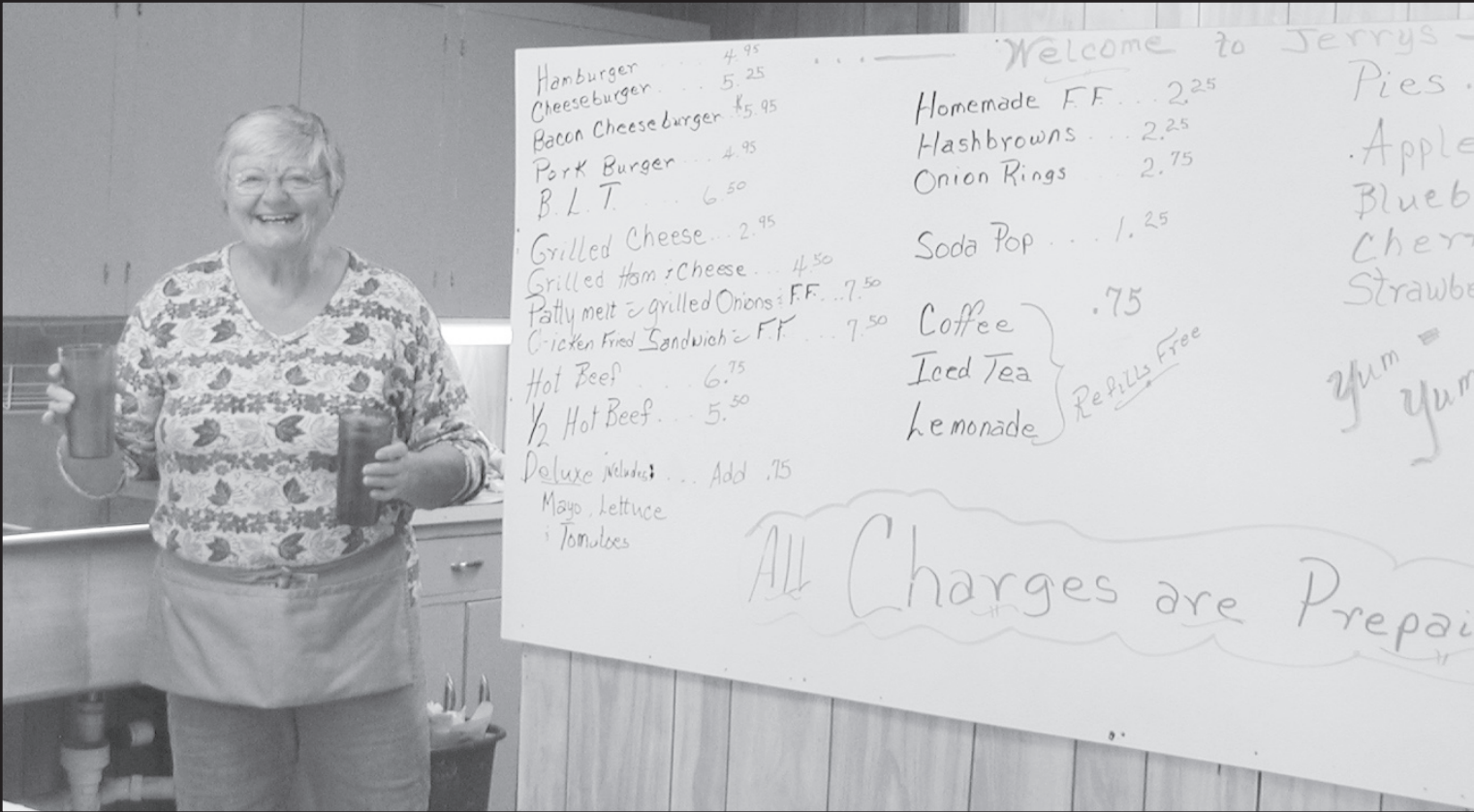
County commissioners approved a 4 percent pay increase for county employees, effective immediately, but excluding themselves.

The raise was in the 2013 budget, but hadn't been official until the motion passed unanimously on Oct. 23.

County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said that the monthly payroll gen-

erally amounts to \$100,000, give or take, which means that roughly, the raise equals an extra \$48,000 a year.

Commissioners had said at a previous meeting that county employees had not received a raise since a 2 1/2 percent bump in the 2011 budget, and before that, it had been three years.



WAITRESS KAY FOTH prepared to serve customers at Norcat's new eating establishment, Jerry's Bar and Grill,

which opened Wednesday, Oct. 24.

— Herald staff photo by Carolyn Plotts

Norcat's has new restaurant business

By CAROLYN PLOTTS c.plotts@nwkansas.com

It's been more than a year since Norcat's has had a cafe, but the wait is over. Jerry's Bar and Grill opened in the former Cardinal Cafe building under the management of Jerry Wescott.

The restaurant will feature hamburgers, chicken-fried steaks, homemade french fries and daily

specials. Jerry's will be open from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Sunday's meal will be served buffet style.

"I wanted the restaurant for the Norcat's community," Mr. Wescott said. "It's my pride and joy."

Employees include Mr. Wescott's daughter, Bonnie, Kay Foth and Cheryl Parrish.

The grill opened Oct. 24. Plans to

expand hours and services include opening a bar with a dart board and a pool table, possibly by Thursday, Nov. 15. Mr. Wescott said he plans to organize league tournaments. He also plans to carry eggs, bread and milk for sale to the public.

Mr. Wescott said he started in the restaurant business when he was just 15. His grandmother had operated cafes and he learned the

business from her at the Home Cafe in Valentine, Neb.

He has another daughter, Tonya Porter, Almena, and two grandchildren, Serenity, 6, and Gage, 4 months.

For information, call (785) 693-3370 or 871-7863.

New administrator hired at hospital

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP sdecamp@nwkansas.com

A new hospital administrator has been found and has agreed to take over at Decatur Health Systems.

Johnathan Owens, who has been a hospital administrator for 11 years, is moving here with his family from LaCrosse. He comes with his wife, Jessica, who is a homemaker, and daughters Nikki, 14, and Emily, 10.

"The school system was one of the main reasons we wanted to move here," said Mr. Owens. "Our children were looking for something that focused on academics as well as sports. When she found out we had

chosen Oberlin, our daughter was very excited. I'd brought them up to see the town on weekends, and now we're very familiar with it. We've been sneaking around for a while."



Mr. Owens

"I think the board was very excited and pleased with the candidates we interviewed and the selection of Mr. Owens," said Interim Administrator Charlie Myers. "He's been working in long-term care for some time, and been in a critical-access hospital for the last two years. We're very happy."

Mr. Owens said that he and his wife were looking for a good small town to raise their kids in, some-

place quiet and safe, and Oberlin was just what they wanted.

"We're excited to live in an intact community that pulls together and loves their town," he said. "The one I was in before, it was a bedroom community; they were in a small town but all worked somewhere else. This town, all the store fronts have businesses, and we look forward to living in a fully functioning small town."

Mr. Owens said he also is excited to work with and support the new doctor and medical director, Dr. Robert Rosin, who moved here only within the last month himself. Dr. Rosin's goals of growth and education at the hospital, Mr. Owens said, are in line with his own.

"I want to rebuild relationships

in the community," he said. "It's very important to bring in students. You need to provide opportunities and education for new doctors and midlevels. That environment is really conducive to growth."

"(Dr. Rosin) is very organized and driven, and has a great a plan for the community that he loves and came back to."

Overall, he said, his mission is clear: he wants to make the hospital shine.

"I think you have a great organization (in Decatur Health Systems)," he said. "There's a lot of talent and a lot of tenure, which is very important. I want to apply mission and direction here, so that we can all work together and rebuild the hospital to its glory days."

Oberlin native hopes to rein in budget

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP sdecamp@nwkansas.com

Of the many issues discussed among this year's political candidates, budgets and deficits might be the biggest, next to jobs.

As state budget director under Gov. Sam Brownback, Oberlin native Steve Anderson knows more than most people about how to manage finances and cut spending. And how he has helped reshape the Kansas budget has become a point of national interest in a country trying to rein in its debt.

"The Kansas economy is a microcosm of the global economy that we can control and change," he said in an interview via e-mail. "I believe if what we do here is successful, it will eventually be the model for pulling the national economy back from the financial abyss it currently teeters on the edge of."

"We have attacked the state's debt by paying it off early, when that option is available, issued new debt only when necessary and prudent, and most importantly, chose to let the citizens of Kansas keep more of their own money."

"We have and will continue to prune government through attacking inefficiencies and unnecessary programs, while focusing on core services such as public education, public safety and infrastructure needs."

Mr. Anderson said he believes in the direction the Kansas government is taking, and in Gov. Brownback's plan to make the state a forerunner for national policy.

"The governor actually did not know me (when he was looking for a budget chief)," he said, "but some of his staff had read some of my writings on fiscally conservative budget policies and set up a meeting."

"I cannot stress enough how impressed I was with the governor at that meeting. As I shared at the talk that night in Oberlin (on Sept. 12 at The Gateway), his vision of Kansas as an 'economic power' and his plan to get there were something I was willing to leave my (accounting) practice to be a small part of."

Being a part of that plan hasn't been easy, he said, and his job is full of tough (and often unpopular) decisions.

"My position has required me to learn to say 'no,'" he said, "even when the pitch for a program or service seems to be a good idea. It does not make one popular, but my staff and I have a standard mantra of, 'We understand every dollar that government spends came from someone else, and it's our obligation to weigh the benefit of each program or service against the benefit the citizen would receive from keeping that dollar.'"

The most important thing going forward, Mr. Anderson said, is that voters start thinking in terms of the future, and not just the present or the past.

"The state of the nation's economy impacts not only how much we collect for the state coffers," Mr. Anderson said, "but also the amount of federal taxes paid by our citizens that return to Kansas within federal programs. The current (Obama) administration appears to want to emulate the European socialist

model, and if we should learn anything from the current Euro crisis, it should be that this model is fiscally unsustainable."

"The national debt is the area where many citizens choose to simply ignore the warnings, since the impact is at some time in the future. The debt burden, including future funding for fundamental programs such as Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid, is a fiscal cliff that could push us to the situations we see in Greece, Italy and Spain."

"Both parties carry some responsibility for this potential nightmare scenario, since it is easy to vote for entitlement costs that don't show up in the current appropriation cycle. Much like living off one's credit cards, there will be a time of reckoning in the not-so-distant future, when the world bond market says to the United States, 'We no longer believe your ability to pay justifies our continuing purchase of your treasury offerings.'"

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