



Snowtime? Playtime!

A SNOW FIGHT was on at the Weigel house Thursday, as mom Julie played with her girls Macy (middle) Shelby (front) and Kelsi (left) in their front yard. The city started the clearing streets downtown (top) at 6 a.m. Thursday, but the crew was still working on Main Street at 9 a.m. But the kids didn't care, as Jesse Isbell and his sister Judith (right) can tell you. The kids were ready to plummet any which way they could Thursday into the blankets of snow in their front yard, which they said had about five

inches of snow. And of course, what's a snow day without sledding? Ryan Ketterl (center) was ready to go with his sled first thing.

— Herald staff photos by Stephanie DeCamp

A white Christmas? Could be ...

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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The last time Oberlin saw a white Christmas was three years ago, but it looks like this year will see kids out sliding and playing in the snow in new coats and winter gear.

The storm that blew through the plains Wednesday night left four to seven inches of snow in Decatur County, said meteorologist Jeremy Martin of the National Weather Service in Goodland. Decatur County Road Supervisor Tim Stallman said that the City of Oberlin got about four to five inches.

"The snow storm we had yesterday was a fast moving system from the Four Corners area," Mr. Martin said. "It's still producing blizzards in Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin. Looks like we had wind around 50 mph late in the afternoon."

In fact, Nebraska seems to have gotten a bigger dose of the storm than Kansas. While most roads were open by Friday, those in a wide band from Holdrege to Omaha were still listed as icy and dangerous.

"For the next system that's supposed to be coming on Christmas," Mr. Martin said, "it

doesn't look like it will have an impact that far east, and it certainly won't be anything like this last one we saw.

"There's a pretty good chance the snow won't melt by Christmas. I don't foresee a lot more accumulation, but with the snow pack there, it won't likely go away."

By late Thursday afternoon, Mr. Stallman said that 90 percent of the county's roads had been plowed. Sheriff Ken Badsy reported that his department had only received one call from a stranded motorist and that none of the drifts had been deep enough to give

cattle a hard time or block the roads.

Police Chief Troy Haas said he got a few calls, too, but nothing too bad.

"So far, the city (crew)'s done a good job," he said, "and people have used their heads and are only out if they need to be. We haven't worked any accidents as of (Thursday). We had a couple of driver assists with people in snow banks, but no fender benders and no injuries."

Out on the highway, however, state troopers and road crews were busy, at least until the state closed most of the roads and traffic

thinned out.

"The good thing is since they closed a lot of the roads early on, we didn't work a lot of crashes," said Trooper Tod Hileman of the Kansas Highway Patrol, noting that the department worked three crashes the night of the storm and 10 the next day. Only one was a "possible injury," however, which means that the driver was hurt, but nothing serious. Mr. Hileman said that there weren't any crashes in Decatur County.

"Usually when the weather gets like (See SNOW on Page 10A)

Stores to close for New Year's

Most area businesses and offices will follow the same schedule for New Year's as they did for Christmas.

Oberlin and Norcatu City offices will be closed New Year's Day and reopen next Wednesday, Jan. 2.

The Decatur County Courthouse, Clerk of the District Court, Farm Service Agency, Decatur County Conservation Office and Natural Resource Conservation offices will all be closed New Year's Day.

Post offices will close at noon next Monday, Dec. 31, and reopen next Wednesday.

Selden and Rexford schools will return from their Christmas break next Wednesday as well. Oberlin schools will have a teacher workday next Wednesday and resume classes on Thursday, Jan. 3.

The Decatur Health Family Practice Clinic in Oberlin will close at noon on New Year's Eve and be closed New Year's Day. Ward Drug plans to close at 4 p.m. New Year's Eve and reopen next Wednesday.

Area banks will all be closed New Year's Day. They will be open New Year's Eve with varying clos-

ing hours. The Bank in Oberlin, Norcatu and Jennings will close their year-end books at 2 p.m., but the offices will be open until 4:30 p.m. Farmers Bank and Trust will close at 3 p.m., First National Bank will close at 2 p.m. and United Northwest Federal Credit Union will close at noon.

Raye's Grocery will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. New Year's Eve and closed all day next Tuesday.

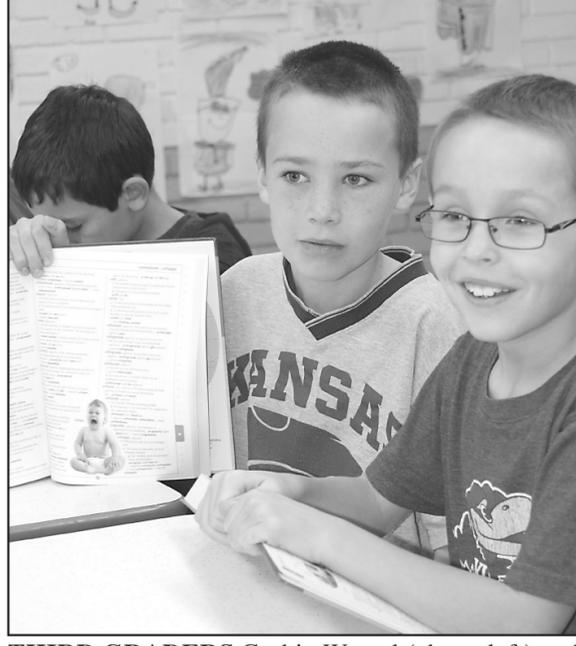
The LandMark Inn will serve dinner from 6 to 8 p.m. New Year's Eve and be closed New Year's Day. Owner Gary Anderson suggests reservations for the surf 'n turf dinner by calling 475-2340.

Pizza Hut will be open regular hours both days. The Re-Load will be open Monday night, but closed New Year's Day. Subway will close at 8 p.m. New Year's Eve but be open regular hours on next Tuesday. The Broken Wheel Bar and Grill in Jennings will be closed both New Year's Eve and Day.

Jerry's Bar and Grill in Norcatu will be serving a prime rib dinner on New Year's Eve and having a kara-

(See STORES on Page 10A)

Learning their language



THIRD GRADERS Corbin Wessel (above left) and Breckin Sauvage talked with their friends about the new dictionaries they had just received from the Oberlin Rotary Club. Several Rotary members handed out dictionaries to the third-grade class last Tuesday.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Pool project approved 3-1

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Around 40 people showed up Thursday to support or speak against an ordinance to establish a 1.5 cent city sales tax to pay for a new swimming pool, but while the council did pass the ordinance, there wasn't much discussion at all.

The city's financial advisor didn't show, so there was no debate of whether the city will pursue a public building commission to manage financing the project. And Mayor Rob McFee said that construction of the new pool likely would not start this August, as originally planned.

John Haas of Ranson Financial Services could not make it to the meeting due to the storm Wednesday, so the council did not get to hear his financial report and advice on the project. Because of that, no other decisions were made, other than to set up a pool account for the city, where people can direct donations to the project.

Pool committee members turned out in full force with their kids. They had come prepared to speak for the project, fearing that opponents might try to derail it, but since Mr. Haas wasn't there, the pool discussion only lasted about 10 minutes.

Council members Josh Williby, Jim Miesner, and Rusty Addleman voted for the motion to approve the tax, with Councilwoman Fonda Farr voting no. Councilman Tim Bowen was absent.

Mr. Williby asked if the council shouldn't debate a motion to establish a public building commission for the project first, but Mr. McFee said that according to state law, the tax had to be established first, and then the manner in which the council would handle the money could be set up, but not that night.

Pool committee member Rachel

Johnson stood to ask if the project would commence in August as planned, to which the mayor said probably not.

"Here's how it has to work," he said. "John comes out to explain our finances to us, then we adopt a resolution to build the pool, then we start to take bids."

"But I don't think it will start in August. I don't see any way that it can start that quickly with everything involved. There is a timeline and a time limit the way these things work, and the way it is, we probably won't have it done by August."

One of the problems, he said, is that three council members (Mr. Williby, Mr. Bowen and Mrs. Farr) are up for re-election in April, and if they're all replaced, then their successors could undo any work done on the project up until then.

"So until then," Mr. McFee said, "there's no point in making promises we can't keep. If the people want to build a pool that's fine, as long as we can pay for it."

Mr. McFee said that Mr. Haas told him the best way to handle the situation is to let the tax begin in April, and then see how much the city collects from it over three to four months. Then, the mayor said, the council can begin making plans to start construction.

"August may not be when we start," he said, "but this isn't something we're going to stop in the middle of. We need to put the tax in effect, collect it and see what we get. Then in July, when we're looking at our budget and making a new one, we can see where to go from there."

Rep. Cassidy to head up state committees

By KEVIN BOTTRELL
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Rep. Ward Cassidy of St. Francis is already hard at work preparing to take over as chairman of the House Education Budget Committee and vice-chair of the House Education Committee.

"I'm excited," said Rep. Cassidy, a former teacher, counselor and principal for the St. Francis schools. "I've already been con-

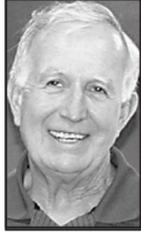
sulting with the governor and the House leadership. I've got the first two weeks ready to go."

Rep. Cassidy is only starting his second term as a state representative, but with redistricting, many experienced House members were defeated, paving the way for incumbents with less seniority to get top committee assignments. Rep. Cassidy said former education chair Rep. Clay Aurand of Bel-

leville probably would have stayed on had he been re-elected.

In reapportionment this year, done by a panel of federal judges in Kansas City after the Legislature deadlocked on drawing new maps, Rep. Cassidy picked up Sherman County and the Colby area in his district, losing Norton and Phillips counties. He kept Decatur, Rawlins and Cheyenne. The same redistricting threw many incumbents together in the same districts, where and elsewhere.

Rep. Cassidy said he got calls



Rep. Cassidy

