

*Small communities benefit from fiber

(Continued from Page 1A)
said Verla Grysch of Norton City/County Economic Development. According to Nex-Tech's website, the firm has taken fiber to Hill City, Munjor, Antonio, Norcatour, Logan, Smith Center, Phillipsburg, Catherine, Hays and other northwest Kansas towns.

Mr. Wick said that while Oberlin didn't get the gold standard, it did get a really good product in place of it: WiMAX, the company's 6 megabit, high-speed wireless Internet.

"First and foremost, quality Internet access levels the playing field," he said, when asked how the 6 megabit Internet compares to fiber-optics. "Would the best be to have fiber to every premise? Yes, that would be the ultimate. But I don't feel communities are left behind if they have quality Internet service there. We did bring fiber to anchor (institutions) ...

"Six megabits is very good in today's technology world. Down the road, potentially, as new technology comes out, we can increase that speed in the future as well."

Yet listed on the company's website, under "Benefits of Fiber Technology," are bullet points like these: "Telecommunication services attract new businesses and level the playing field for small communities" and "The guarantee that you will be ready for future growth and expansion with unlimited bandwidth!"

"I think that high-speed Internet is essential ... to helping home-based businesses who could use this speed to help their business," said Greg Lohofener, the former chairman of the Economic Development board.

"Mine is a good example, as I just moved the business into the house and had to move my web server to DSL versus the fiber available at the BEE Center.

"We do have the fiber in some key business or government centers, but I feel they have turned their back on us due to the excuse of the power (poles') capacity for carrying theirs."

An academic expert agrees.

"In communities that have fiber, we've seen some very unique things that are strengthening opportunities there," said Mark Bannister, dean of the College of Business and Entrepreneurship at Fort Hayes State University. "It can be very capable of carrying telemedicine, where a primary health care center like a hospital and a larger regional hospital or medical center can communicate regarding a patient. A doctor at a distance will help to diagnose a medical condition.

"In Phillipsburg, they have had supervised therapy from medical providers at a distance. Technology continues to evolve, and there's been discussion that eventually we'll have it in the home, where you

How fast is our Internet?

Wondering how your Internet service stacks up? Here's how area providers measure against the gold standard of fiber-optic cable:

- AT&T's residential high-speed Internet Elite service allows for 6 megabit download speeds in Oberlin. It is the only speed available in town through the company.

- Verizon's high speed residential Internet offers two speeds, depending on what network you are on. If you are on the 3G network, then speeds vary from 5 to 7 megabits. Verizon is in the process of building a tower east of the Decatur County Co-op to offer a 4G network for their cell phones, however, and that will have speeds up to 12 megabits.

- Eagle Cable high speed residential Internet goes up to 10 megabits. It has plans offering 1, 3, 6, and 10 megabits.

- Nex-Tech offers Internet plans that include 1, 1.5, 3 and 6 megabits via either a wireless or Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) connection.

sit down in front of your computer and talk to your doctor to tell them about how you feel, (give) your temperature and blood pressure over the network. Then the doctor or nurse can provide information without having to travel."

When other companies were contacted (see side bar), they all said the same thing: 6 megabits is really good. Most companies offered anywhere from 1 to 15 megabits for residential Internet, and all of them said that their 6-megabit speed was the most common today. Travis Kohlrus, general manager of Eagle Communications in Hays, which runs the cable system in Oberlin, went so far as to say that the average speed of Internet in the whole nation is only a little bit faster, about 6.6 megabits.

Schools, Mr. Kohlrus said, need speeds from 25 to 100 megabits, and there are businesses and government complexes that use 150 megabits or more.

These "anchor institutions" are the ones that Nex-Tech did run fiber to, said Mr. Wick: the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corp. at the Business Enhancement and Entrepreneurial Center, the courthouse, the county Health Department, the Last Indian Raid Museum, the Sheriff's Department, the hospital, The Gateway civic

center, the Oberlin City Library, city offices, the police department and the Oberlin School District office and schools themselves.

But what about businesses? "I don't see everyone having to have fiber to each premise," Mr. Wick said. "What you need to have is quality Internet to level that playing field. If you don't have quality, high-speed Internet, that would hold you back. Let's say you have a large business that says, 'To stay here or move there, we would need fiber.' Then we would work with the business or community to make that happen. We have fiber in the community. So if someone were to try and relocate to Oberlin, we would do everything we could to make it happen."

Several people asked if Nex-Tech hadn't taken federal money to do the project here in Oberlin, a claim that Mr. Wick said is a misunderstanding.

"We did not get federal money," Mr. Wick said. "We were approved through the Rural Utility Service for a loan for the city for the project, but we did not go forward with drawing down that money once we ran into the power-pole issue."

But that hasn't changed the spurned feelings of some of the more involved community members who were looking forward to a leg up on the competition of other nearby towns.

"I don't think they ran out of money, but incentive," said Mr. Metcalf. "It was kind of strange to me that they would spend the money they did, and then suddenly discover there wasn't room on the poles and leave. It didn't sound plausible. If that was the case, why didn't the engineers discover that before they spent the money here? Why didn't they research it a little better before they started pouring cement and buying property?"

"When you're talking small quantities (of fiber)," said Mr. Wick, "we can do that, but when you have to take it to every home or business ... to try to do that for every structure in Oberlin would not be cost effective. On a small basis, it's feasible, but it would cost \$2.5 million to bury lines for everyone.

Mr. Wick said that if Nex-Tech becomes aware of any grant opportunities from the federal government to try again on the project, they would.

"In the long run," said Mr. Lohofener, "we will need high-speed fiber to be able to attract some future businesses that use this and this is a growing part of the U.S. economy. We do have fiber lines going through the town from Qwest and AT&T, but neither of them is making it available to customers."

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Mrs. Shobe said that the center needs to buy two heating and cooling units for individual rooms. The commissioners agreed provided she bring in the total cost beforehand for approval. Chairman Stan McEvoy said that generally any purchase over \$500 should be brought to them for approval.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine asked about how the research was coming on replacement of the center's wheelchair ramp. Mrs. Shobe said that for now, the cost of a ramp that follows the guidelines set by the Americans with Disabilities Act is keeping it out of reach.

"We're trying to scale down the cost as much as possible," she said. "If you go right out the front doors, we'd have to build a platform and head west for 60 feet. It has to be that long, because of the slope, to get to street level. And just that will be over \$50,000."

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Giving the gift that keeps on giving



A RED CROSS WORKER checked the blood flow going from volunteer Connie Simonsson during a blood drive at The Gateway last Wednesday.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Pizza fund raiser coming up

The Norcatour Fire Department is having its annual pizza fund raiser, and if you want to get in on the homemade action, you'll have to place your order by Friday.

"It's the 12th year we've done it," said Norcatour Fire Chief Carl Lyon. "You order and we deliver to your house. It's a homemade pizza, delivered hot or cold, but most are cold so people can freeze them."

The pizzas are 12 inches wide and can be ordered with any combination of the following toppings: beef, sausage, pepperoni, canadian bacon, cheese, mushrooms, green peppers, onion, black olives and sauerkraut. The limit is 10 pizzas per order, and deliveries will be made on Sunday, Jan. 27.

And the cost? Well, that's up to you.

"A donation is what it costs," Chief Lyon said, "and there's no suggestion we make for it. The total we get varies from year to year; I don't know what we made last year, but it was in the ballpark of around \$4,000."

All of the proceeds, he said, go to help the department buy supplies and repairs.

"We need all kinds of stuff," he said. "We need to add onto our firehouse; we'd like to add another bay to

get more vehicles in, and update it ... and we'd like to replace the fire trucks eventually. We got a new one a month ago, and we'd like to update more of them. Right now, we've got one city truck and four rural trucks."

Last year's proceeds went for safety equipment and supplies, Mr. Lyon said. This is the only fund raiser that the Norcatour firemen do all year, he said.

"By the time I get all my guys around to help, you know, we have a good time doing it," he said. "It's a lot of work. We usually start Friday browning the meat, and it takes all day Saturday to cook them. Last year, we did about 500 pizzas."

If you'd like to order a pizza, contact any of the Norcatour fire fighters: Chief Lyon, Darren Wentz, Doug Dempewolf, Galen Wentz, Jeff Roe, Scott Hartzog, Don Cressler, Troy Wentz, Mark Bailey, Gail Bailey, Sam Stapp, Lucas Bailey, Cody Kane or Scott Hobbgood. You may also call the Norcatour City Office at (785) 693-4461.

The firemen will even deliver ready-to-bake-or-freeze pizzas to Oberlin, Jennings or Norton.

NOTICE OF 64th

Annual Meeting

Monday, January 21, 2013

11:30 a.m.
to be held at the St. Francis Parish Hall
104 S. Wabash, Norton, Kansas

Please R.S.V.P. by Friday, January 14

\$1.00 PER PERSON

United Northwest Federal Credit Union

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117 S. Penn, Oberlin, KS • Phone 785-475-2322



website: www.unwfcu.org

Winter maintenance spells expense

With winter in full swing, the Good Samaritan Center is starting to need some expensive repairs, Administrator Janice Shobe told county commissioners at their meeting last Tuesday.

The center, Mrs. Shobe said, gets \$40,000 a year from the county, which County Treasurer Jean Ann Hale said is the maximum levy allowed by state law without a vote. Mrs. Shobe said the center is looking at some hefty needs, and brought in the year's first bills for winter repairs, totaling \$6,021.

"Precision Safety Technologies monitors fire systems," she said, "and we're required by law to do so. They come periodically and Good Samaritan pays for the contract, but the bill is for when they inspect smoke detectors once a year and find the defective ones, and then we have to replace them. Ours are about five years old, and 49, about half, need replacing. That total is \$3,942."

"The second bill is from R&M Service Center. First is the walk-in freezer attached to the building, and then the compressor, an inline dryer and Freon, and the furnace we had

trouble with. Lastly was repair to the wiring going to a heating unit. So that total bill is \$2,079."

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Sire: Sitz Upward MGS: SAV Pioneer
EPD's BW +1.9 WW +67 YW +121 Milk +36
205 Day Wt. 857 \$B +68.86



Sire: Connealy Consensus 7229 MGS: SAV Final Answer
EPD's BW +.8 WW +65 YW +111 Milk +28
205 wt. 836 \$B +76.44



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400 Angus Sell!

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Featuring Sons of:

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- Connealy Consensus - 20 sons sell!
- SAV Pioneer - 20 sons sell!
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millbarangus@hotmail.com
Auctioneer: Joe Goggins



★ Do you have concerns or questions about your daycare?

★ Are you interested in becoming a home daycare provider?

Contact the KDHE child care licensing surveyor, Nancy Bollig, RN at (785) 769-4731.