

Testing the waters: quality where it counts



LARRY LIVELY planted his award-winning windbreaks in spring of 2008. He said that eventually, they'll grow to be as high as 25 feet tall.

- Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

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Every year the Kansas Bankers Association recognizes a farm family who has taken measures to improve and protect water quality. This year the award goes to Ward and Jodi Votapka for their work in maintaining nutrients in the soil.

Using a soil probe, Mr. Votapka takes about 15 samples for every 40 acres of field he plans on harvesting a crop from the next year. The location of every sample is carefully noted, and the soil samples are analyzed by Olson Agriculture

Lab in McCook. Test results indicate the areas of his fields that need to be fertilized, he said, so this way he's monitoring the soil levels and not applying fertilizer where it's not needed.

Mr. and Mrs. Votapka live one and a half miles north of Oberlin on U.S. Highway 83, in a lovely country home built 12 years ago by Mike Elwood. They have two sons, Chase and Connor, who are both out of college.

Mrs. Votapka is the director of the lab at Decatur County Hospital. Mr. Votapka is a life-long native of Decatur County. His parents are Janette Votapka and the late Howard Votapka.



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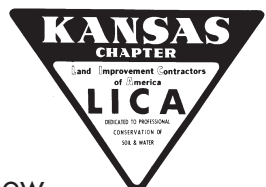
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