

Letters to the Editor

Reader critical on mayor story

To the Editor:
When Stephanie DeCamp’s recent article regarding the mayor’s concerns about funding for the swimming pool was published “Mayor: We Don’t Have Pool Money,” *The Oberlin Herald*, Jan. 30, 2013, the reporter was surprisingly unprofessional – so much so, that a few people suggested she had been smoking dope.
Although it’s possible that she hadn’t been.
Journalistic ethics were mauled beyond recognition by stating that “a few people” (who?) “suggested”

(oh?) that the mayor had been drinking.
I am surprised that her enthusiasm to create a story went unchecked by the publisher. A few people have suggested that perhaps the publishers were under the influence of cocaine.
Although they probably weren’t.
It’s been suggested by some that those who buy *The Herald*, under the assumption they are getting news, are using LSD.
Although perhaps they aren’t.
Gary Shike, Oberlin

School apologizes for team’s behavior

To the Editor:
On behalf of the community of Tribune and Greeley County, we would like to extend an apology to the fans of the Oberlin School District, their administrators, coaches and especially the players on the boys team. The behavior of a few of our players (at a game Friday in Tribune) was intolerable, particularly after the game, when two of the players refused to shake the hands of your team. These players have been reprimanded, and they will be punished according to the players’ handbook. This behavior is unacceptable, and we will be taking steps to rectify the situation.
Your players were very well behaved, and we appreciated the way your team and coaches handled the very unusual situation in the fourth quarter (when Tribune could put only three players on the floor).

Their gesture of good sportsmanship serves as an example of the best in sports, and the Decatur County Community can be proud of all of these young men and their coaches.
Greeley County Schools, its administration and coaches want to develop good relationships with all of the members of the Northwest Kansas League. We are happy to belong to a league that has treated us very well. We pray for your forgiveness for our players, school and community, and we ask that you give us a second chance to show that we can behave in a good sporting fashion.
Ken Bockwinkel, principal and superintendent
David Schneider activities director
Greeley County Schools, Tribune

Former resident reminded of home

To the Editor:
Greetings from Texas! While living in Oberlin, I had the privilege of writing the Good Sam News. In the unpacking, I found an article I had written, and reading it again, made me so appreciate my time at Good Sam and the wonderful work the Lord is doing there.
Since moving to Dallas, I have found myself a bit homesick, so I chuckled to myself when the words became so applicable to my life and ministered to my heart.
The article started like this: “Have you ever been lost or homesick? Do you remember the horrible feelings of helplessness and loneliness? We have recently added several new residents into our home. This week, I observed how they were adjusting.
One lady told me early on, “I feel lost.” When a person is lost, they need to be found! It is our mission here at the Good Sam to provide a “home-like” environment for those who join our family. We want to meet all their needs, physical, emotional and spiritual. We spent much time helping her to find her way around, introduced her to others, some she already knew, and some she quickly befriended.

Then we invited her to Bible study. It was there she began to relax and feel “at home.” As Christians, we belong to a universal family, and when we gather to worship, pray and open God’s Word together, we come into His fold and He meets our every need (Luke 15:4-7). In Him, we are home.
The article continued, and this time I thought not only of Good Sam but of our sweet little town of Oberlin: When someone comes to live here, they truly do become family, and saying farewell is always a bittersweet time. Not only do we say goodbye to our dearly loved residents, but often it means saying goodbye to families as well. What a joy to know that through our common faith in Jesus, we will one day be reunited in heaven.” So true!
John and I are enjoying the big city. There is much to see, do and learn with plenty of opportunity to serve! However, there is an equal if not greater appeal of quaint, small-town living ... friends, family and friendly neighborhood businesses. Dorothy said it well, “There’s no place like home!” Please know you are loved and missed greatly.
Lisa Paulson, Dallas

Nebraskan disses pool

To the Editor:
I live in Nebraska and have subscribed to your paper for about 50 years.
Common sense tells me that the people that want a new pool should raise the money to build it.
Take a vote of the local businesses to see if they want to charge more sales tax. People are fickle; they

will vote for more sales tax, then go somewhere else to shop.
I learned to swim in a muddy farm pond and dirty sand pits.
There are lots of towns with older swimming pools than yours. \$2 million is a lot to spend for something only used three months of the year.
Dale Bamesberger, Indianola

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:
Elsewhere: Teffani Zadeh, S.D. cago; Brad Ware, Gettysburg, S.D.
Washington: Mary Reeves Leber, Mercer Island; Myron Johnson, Spokane Valley.
California: Thomas Cooper, San Diego; Judith Benton, Merced; Carol Bell, MiWuk Village; Mary Ann Bernard, Sacramento.
Colorado: Robert Gaines, Brighton; Gary Torlumke, Centennial; Diane Jolly, Hugo; Lorene Ander-

son, Faye Lombardi, Lakewood.
Oklahoma: Col. Floyd Badsky, Norman; Carolyn Wallace, Ardmore; Tim Bailey, Broken Arrow; Bob Crawford, Kansas.
Kansas: Frances Lintecum, Lawrence; Merla Rhodes, Hays; Martin Burton, Bird City; Bill DeMay, Linn Valley; Mary Anderson, Osborne; Wayne Smith Sr., Burlington; Magdalene Gassman, Quinter; Grace Reeves, Almaena; Mrs. Losson Pike, Ashland; Steve O’Toole, Olathe.
Area: Gary Hunziker, Selden.

*Congressman speaks here

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that. We have a long tradition here in Kansas of getting out and traveling around.
“I do (these trips) throughout the year and I get nervous if I don’t have a town hall meeting after a couple months. I think ‘Gosh, what’s going on out there?’ I can talk on the phone and get emails, but unless I’m talking to people, I don’t know what they’re really saying out there, because it’s my duty to really represent what they’re feeling and thinking.”
One of the most common things he hears, he said, is people wondering what they can do to help. The biggest help, he said, is to just keep telling him your stories.
“I’m a small-town guy; I don’t like big towns,” he said. “I don’t like Washington. I admit that. I’m just doing what I’m doing and trying to communicate to my colleagues, because your stories are so important. It’s important to communicate real life things, because generally if you’re conservative or moderate,

you have good motives, and I just want to give them more experiences of what’s really happening out there.”
Despite the many worries and issues discussed, Mr. Huelskamp made sure to end the meeting on a hopeful note, and to reassure those gathered that America had been through tough times before, and would get through these, too.
“There is hope,” he said. “Now is the best time in the world to not live in a big city. Numerous towns we’ve been through are seeing a little growth, with their kids coming back, whether to be near home or to find jobs. Despite the Farm Bill, we still have crop insurance, and it will rain again some day.
“I’d like to ask for your prayers for our nation. I disagree with our president, yes, but pray for him, for his wisdom. He’s our leader right now.
“It’s tough times, but I think we’re going to solve it. I don’t think it’s too late.”



BILL DUNCAN (left) was one of about 40 people who showed up for Congressman Tim Huelskamp’s “town hall” meeting Thursday at the Decatur County Courthouse.
– Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp

*Wheat still needs more water

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Shroyer said, “so we won’t have those extreme temperatures in the next few weeks. I’m not saying it saved the wheat in the long run, but it helped in the short run.
“Ideally, we need routine snow or rain through the next six weeks, with no real highs or lows – just good old normal temperatures. Then we need a little below-normal temperatures in March, April and May. Not too low. We don’t want it to warm up too quickly, because it won’t tiller as much. We need a gradual green-up so it continues to tiller, because we need tillering in the spring

since it didn’t in the fall.”
“Then the doctor would order adequate moisture. Not a surplus, just routine. Then from flowering on, you want a few degrees below normal temperatures. With the drought, climatologists say that you stay with the trend, and right now the trend is for dry conditions. So until something breaks that, you have to assume that it will keep up the trend of being dry. I think it’s more likely the drought will continue than it is likely to break.”
Meteorologist Dave Relihan, who worked with the Wheat Commission and the Wheat

Growers on their report, said that right now, the state is in the middle of the worst drought in 60 years. Replenishing the dry subsoil, he said, would require “1993-like flooding,” which won’t happen anytime soon.
The drought, said Mr. Relihan, started in Texas about four years ago, and appears to be breaking up there now. While it will be at least another year before Kansas starts to return to more regular precipitation levels, he said, there should still be more moisture this year than there was last.

*Ordinance gets a going over

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related to Johnson County. This to me is overhanded and unacceptable, but I have figured out that I am not in the majority of our people, and I can’t do anything about it.”
The key points of debate were whether the code enforcement officer should be someone who lives here in town or is from out of town, whether or not that officer has a right to go onto properties under investigation, how much time someone should be given to remedy a problem, and what constitutes “blight.”
“The officer we have is from out of town,” said council member Jim Miesner, “and I don’t like it, but it’s the one thing that guarantees a lack of bias. If someone from town does this (job), there’s too much risk for favoritism.”
“It seems to me that it would be better to have someone from here be the officer,” said Councilman Tim Bowen. “Someone that knows people and can talk to them and try to help with the

problem without tickets and letters.”
In the end, the council agreed with Mr. Miesner, and decided to keep the current code enforcement officer, Jan Ackerman of Hoxie.
The right of entry was also discussed.
“It’s a matter of having some respect for people and giving them the benefit of the doubt,” said Mr. Bowen. “You have to at least attempt to contact them, and don’t just rush in there and start taking pictures.”
The other council members agreed, and decided that the officer will no longer have any right to enter a property. While investigating a complaint, they decided, the officer will simply have to work from the street, alleyway or an accommodating neighbor’s yard.
The council debated what ‘unsightly appearance that constitutes a blight’ might mean.
“I read that,” said Mr. McFee, “and I drove around and guess there’s not maybe four houses that are in violation of the paint code.”

“With the cost of painting a house these days,” said Mr. Bowen, “forcing someone to paint their house is expensive. My parents have a small house and it cost them \$4,000.”
The council agreed that they would take appeals in on this section of the ordinance on a case-by-case basis. So basically, if your home looks bad enough that two neighbors have complained about it, but you come before the council and explain that you just can’t afford the repairs, a compromise could be reached.
The council also agreed that they would like to see a community outreach group assembled that could help people who cannot clean up their homes due to age or physical condition. A volunteer group formed last summer when the topic was hot, but none of the council members had heard of it since then. Mr. Bowen said he knew of two weekends when the group had assembled to help people.

Council rewrites property rules for city

At its meeting on the nuisance ordinance, the Oberlin City Council eliminated “private enclosures” from those places a neighbor may complain about. A private enclosure, assuming it blocks the view of whatever it may hold, cannot be a nuisance.
In Section 3 of the ordinance, “injury” was changed to “physical injury” for clarification. The rule of thumb regarding complaints of injury, Mayor McFee said, is “No blood, no foul,” meaning that any injury resulting from a neighbor’s health nuisance violation must be substantial enough to file a complaint.
In Section 7, “brush and woody vines” were struck from the list of problem weeds that may be complained against.
The code enforcement officer now will only pursue an investigation into a property if two people have signed a complaint, which will be

on the public record.
In Section 1, the council decided to take out the phrase “filth, or any other disagreeable or offensive thing” under what may prompt a complaint. The council members agreed that the phrase was too broad, and could be construed to reference something a neighbor doesn’t like, as opposed to a legitimate concern.
A similar strike was made later on in Section 1. The phrase, again regarding what may warrant a complaint, was “to the injury, annoyance or inconvenience to any neighbor or neighborhood.” The word annoyance was removed.
Originally, the ordinance said that only people living within the city limits could make complaints, and the council changed that to include anyone who owns property within the limits.
The council is the review board for appeals. Members considered setting up a separate board,

but figured it would be difficult to find people to volunteer for it. They also wanted to remain in the process somehow.
Before, appeals were to be sent to the governing body (the council), and now, they are to be sent to the city office, since the limit is 10 days to enter your appeal and the council only meets once every two weeks.
A violation of the weed section of the ordinance can draw a fine of up to \$500. A junked vehicle violation or a property in violation can draw a fine up to \$500 fine and/or up to 30 days in jail.
If a complaint is filed about a gross violation of the ordinance that immediately raises a health issue or concern, like rodent infestation, the police will be contacted to immediately address the situation.

*Accidents happened 24 hours, about three miles apart

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but Decatur County ambulances and fire crews responded from Oberlin and Jennings.
When it left the road about 11:30 p.m. Friday, the report says, the car rolled, sending the driver to a Wichita hospital and a passenger to the hospital in Hoxie.
Mr. Harms said the accident happened at the curve, adding that he thought it might have involved excessive speed.
Trooper Gizzarelli could not be reached for comment. None of the hospitals contacted could confirm any of the patients’ being there. The trooper said in his report that the women were in a 2013 Toyota Corolla.
The report said the driver, Abagile

Gifford, 18, Colby, was flown by air ambulance to Via Christi St. Francis Hospital in Wichita. She was wearing a seat belt, the patrol said. A passenger, Heather Tolal, 19, Hillsboro, was taken to the Sheridan County Health Complex in Hoxie, the report says. She had not been wearing a seat belt.
The other passengers, Ashley Elsasser, 21, Clifton; Samantha Janson, 18, Colby; and Arielle Gil-Sanz, 19, Manhattan, were checked at the scene. The report said neither Janson nor Gil-Sanz was wearing a safety restraint.
Abby Gifford is listed on the college’s volleyball roster with a home address in Hawaii. However, college officials refused to confirm the women were enrolled. Dr. Keegan

Nichols, vice president of student affairs and marketing, said federal privacy laws prevented her from saying they were students.
Athletic Director Ryan Sturdy did confirm that Gifford was a freshman

middle blocker on the volleyball team. He said she had been released from the hospital Saturday.
“It’s unfortunate anytime we have any of our students in an accident,” Sturdy said.

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