



MAIN STREET WAS under attack Friday, as machines, shovels and bags of salt took to the bricks to clear out the 12 inches of snow that blanketed most of the county,

giving farmers and kids alike something to be happy about. Travelers and trucks, however, found themselves in a tough position as Interstate 70 was closed down and drivers had to

take to motels and shelters.
— Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp



LAST WEEK'S STORM was the kind that snow days are meant for, and Decatur Community Junior/Senior High students Judith Isbell (left, at top), Erin May (lower left) and Emily Bates (lower right) took full advantage of it with an afternoon of snowball fights. Erin (above) even got some time in between battles for sledding.
— Herald photos by Sue May

Decisions loom over power plant

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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The City of Oberlin has some serious decisions to make about its power supply, including whether or not to invest in the power plant and how its power lines are going to be repaired, City Foreman Dan Castle told the City Council.

"We have a complex problem at the plant," Mr. Castle said at a council meeting Feb. 7. "I've got engines there that are 40 to 60 years old, and because of the (Environmental Protection Agency's) regulations, we have to sink at least \$250,000 into it to make it a viable source of energy. They've limited us on 100 hours a year per unit, and we've had outages where that won't cut it."

The total for the repairs to get the plant up to the agency's standards, where it could actually supply the city with its own power, will cost more like \$500,000, Mr. Castle said. This is because it's not just the catalytic converters it needs, it also will need repairs to its vacuums and underground fuel storage tanks. On top of that, he said, there was a major malfunction at the lift station, and the sewer department will have to spend several thousand dollars on

repairs to its pumps.

However, Mr. Castle said he has been negotiating with Caterpillar, and if the city wanted to, it could buy new, regulation-friendly generators, transformers and converters for \$600,000. These would allow the city to run its own power, and even become a player in the power pool, he said.

"So I want you to be aware that this isn't going to be cheap," he said. "You'll have a hard time paying it. The money (in the electric fund) is going so fast, I think you'll be shocked one of these months ... There are no other choices, and I don't want to sit home in the dark."

Mr. Castle also noted that the city's contract with Sunflower will be up in six years, and the rates for purchasing electricity from outside sources will only get higher.

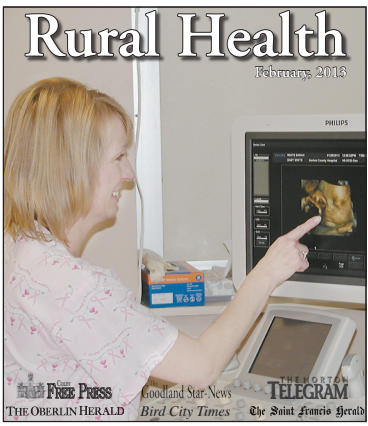
And those aren't the only problems facing the electric department, Mr. Castle told the council. There's another equally as troublesome one: The city's infrastructure—the poles, and most notably, the power lines.

"There's a guy I've got coming in who will attempt to give us an

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Special health section inside

Inside today's newspaper, readers will find Nor'West Newspapers' annual Rural Health special edition. This 36-page section features hospitals, health facilities and other information about health care across north-west Kansas. The staffs of *The Oberlin Herald*, *The Saint Francis Herald*, *The Norton Telegram*, *the Colby Free Press*, *the Bird City Times* and *The Goodland Star-News* helped gather and present information.



Selden post office subject of meeting

The U.S. Postal Service will hold a community meeting at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at the Selden Community Center, 110 N. Kansas Ave., to discuss reducing business hours at the Selden post office.

The Selden office now is open 6 1/2 hours a day Monday through Friday and 30 minutes on Saturday. The service's proposal would be to reduce this to six hours a day.

Brian Sperry, regional spokesman for the service in Denver, said

the agency has been trying to listen to the public. When the service held community meetings earlier, he said, citizens said they would rather keep their post offices at reduced hours than see them close.

More than 13,000 offices are being reviewed, he said. The list includes Rexford, Brewster, Bird City, Edson, Gove, Grainfield, Grinnell, Herndon, Kanorado, Weskan, Jennings, Lenora, McDonald and Winona in this area.

Pool committee: It's time to raise money

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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The Oberlin Pool Committee is planning at least three fund raisers for this year to help pay for the new swimming pool and maybe to add amenities like slides and toys.

First up is a night of classy fun featuring wine and cheese, a silent auction and a showing of Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations." The event will start at 6 p.m. and the movie will be at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 6, at the Sunflower Cinema. Tickets are \$15, and include snacks, wine and the movie. The committee is taking donations of wine and items for the auction until then.

So far, a slumber party kit, facial, swimming

lessons, two \$25 gift certificates to Penn Ave. Boutique and a framed photo from *The Oberlin Herald* have been donated for the silent auction.

David Swank and Ken Badsy, both members of the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce board, attended the meeting and offered the Chamber's help with the events.

Rachel Johnson, a member of the committee who is also running for City Council this spring, said that she spoke to Duane Dorshorst, a board member at the cinema who has helped put on fund raisers like this. He told her, she said, that an event like this can pull in about \$1,000.

The next idea the pool moms are cooking up is a bonfire wienie roast sometime this spring,

possibly with live music, out at Sappa Park. Danielle Leitner, another committee member who is running for City Council, suggested a kids event at The Gateway — something where they could have games and bouncy castles, she said. The other members agreed that they should make sure the fund raisers target all ages, from kids to moms and grandparents.

The group also talked about holding a dance (if one hasn't already been booked) on Alumni Weekend, when Decatur County natives come back to celebrate their alma mater reunions and visit with each other. It's usually over Memorial Day Weekend, May 24 to 26, said Shayla Williby, and they could charge at the door and have

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Moisture comes at last

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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The storm that swept through Decatur County last Wednesday and Thursday may have scotched some travel plans, but it was hard to find anyone that was complaining about the 7 to 12 inches of snow that blanketed the area.

Better yet, with only light winds, most of the snow reportedly stayed on thirsty fields.

The National Weather Service observer reported 13 inches, amounting to .78 of an inch of moisture, but reports on *The Oberlin Herald's* facebook page varied from 7 to 14 inches of snow.

And while other counties may have had problems, this one was ready and waiting.

"There were some cars in ditch-

es," said Chief Dispatcher Marilyn Mack on Friday, "but that's going to happen anytime you have a snow. Other than that, there hasn't been anything out of the ordinary."

And this despite Governor Sam Brownback declaring a state disaster for 53 counties (not including Decatur) last Tuesday as the storm was hitting. Declaring a disaster, the governor's press release said, puts the state's response plan into action and gives the Kansas Division of Emergency Management authority to coordinate relief efforts if local governments are overwhelmed.

Kristin Brands, regional public affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation in (See SNOW on Page 5A)

Judge may visit scene

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Judge Preston Pratt scheduled a crime scene visit by the jury, defendant, both lawyers and the judge himself in the murder trial of an Oberlin man next month.

The motion to visit the home where the alleged murder took place was made by Nicole Romine, the assistant attorney general trying the case, at a hearing last Tuesday. Though it wasn't actually approved — Judge Pratt said the motion couldn't be approved until the trial actually begins — it is considered an "advisement in preparation for a motion," which allows the prosecutor to make the necessary travel arrangements ahead of time.

Dylan Coryell, 24, is charged with first-degree murder in the shooting of Airman Corey Cook, 22, on Oct. 16, 2011. He has been awaiting trial in the county jail since his arrest Oct. 18 of that year. The trial is set for two weeks, Monday to Friday, March 18 to 29.

Initially, Mr. Coryell's defense attorney, Justin Barrett, objected to the visit, saying it would be unfair to Mr. Coryell.

Ms. Romine countered: "The key is, will it help the jury?" she said. "This case is all about the size, location, and angles within the scene of the alleged crime, and frankly, understanding those angles will help the jury decide which theory is credible. With the photographs and diagrams, it's not so clear. I'll be honest, even with those, I don't understand the scene until I see it. It's a very relevant fact to our case."

Mr. Barrett said that should the court allow the visit, then Mr. Coryell and his lawyer should be present, since the visit would have a considerable impact on the case. He also requested that the defense be able to go into the house before trial to photograph everything for the

record, in the event that the defense wants to make an appeal.

Judge Pratt agreed to Mr. Barrett's ideas, and said that if Ms. Romine can credibly argue the need for the jury to visit the scene during trial, he would like to go as well.

"One of the things I've noticed in being a judge is how little the judge actually knows about the evidence when it's presented," he said, "not unlike the jury. But unlike the attorneys who have been to the scene or reviewed the photos, I haven't had the advantage of doing that."

"I do know, however, that it is difficult to look at a photo and understand how it fits together. And I think it's important for the jury to understand what the facts are. And it's important to both sides that they understand. So assuming that the state can lay a proper foundation and the scene hasn't changed since the incident, the court will grant the motion to allow the jury to visit."

"It seems to me the real important parts may not be the furniture in the bedroom, but the hallways, doors, and how wide they are is critical. Assuming that it's granted, the state will arrange transportation for the jury and a court officer who will arrive separately from the counsel and defendant. Unless there's some reason it will be objectionable, I would go as well. I think it would be appropriate that there will be no discussions, not of the trial or anything involving the trial, and in fact, no discussion at all between the jury as they ride to and view the scene."

Ms. Romine said that she had done this sort of trip before, and usually provided a school bus to transport everyone, as well as a bailiff

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