

Bridge request denied

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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A group of officials asked Decatur County commissioners and Road Supervisor Tim Stallman last Tuesday if the county could work on a bridge in Jennings Township, but heard that the county has a lot more bridges than it has money to fix them.

When the county canceled this year's meeting with township officials, Mr. Stallman suggested that if township officials had anything they needed to discuss, they could come to the commissioners' meeting last Tuesday. Dean Vacura, Duwayne Metz, Dennis Ritter and Kenny Carter, all of Jennings Township, were the only ones to show up, and aside from the standard issues like weed control and road work, they had one big thing to talk about.

"The guys in Jennings have a bridge problem," said Mr. Carter, "and just wanted to make sure Tim still has it on his mind."

"We asked them to look into the possibility of doing improvements on a bridge on one of the township roads down by the old gravel pit," said Mr. Metz. "What happened is there's a cement slab where the water runs, and it's plugged up. We asked them to look at that and put us on the list to work on it, however long that will take. Hopefully in the future they can look at it as a project."

How much, you may ask? About two bridges a year, the road boss said, adding that because the bridge in Jennings — which is really just a concrete slab with a drainage pipe under it — was only getting clogged occasionally and still functional, it wouldn't be on the short list any time soon.

"We have about 350 bridges in the county," he added, "and roughly two-thirds of them need some repair, maintenance or replacement."

"We used to have a bridge, dirt and maintenance crew, and now it's down to just the last at half the size, doing all three jobs.... Basically, I can't add any more bridges to the list of ones we're going to work on. If anything happens to the inventory of bridges to be fixed, it will be reduced. A cheap bridge is \$100,000 to \$140,000."

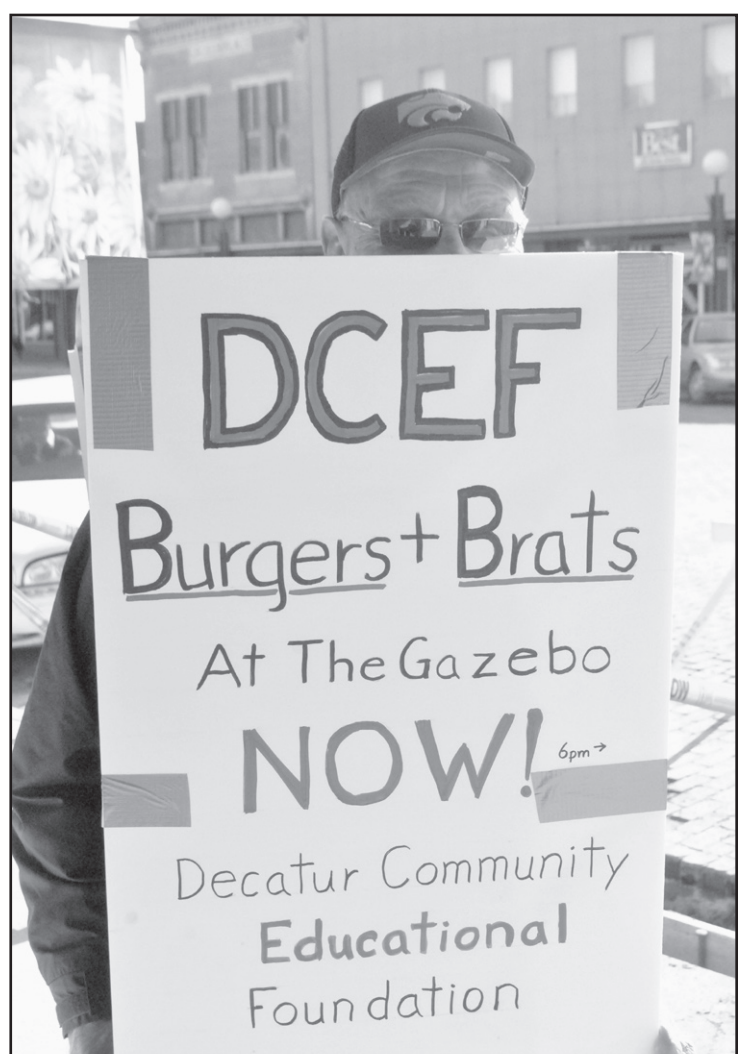
One problem, he said, is that the federal government is cutting back on what it gives to states for bridges. That could cost the county \$90,000 a year, Mr. Stallman said.

Bridge building and maintenance is paid for in two ways, he said: First, through county property taxes, which provides the department with about \$65,000 a year. The second source is the federal government.

Mr. Stallman said the county was getting around \$160,000 a year from the federal government, but now, it's set to decrease that amount to about \$75,000 over the next year and half. That leaves about \$235,000 a year for about 233 bridges.

"It's not just us, either," he said. "It's everywhere. Funds are dwindling and we have to do the best we can. Over the years, we'll do our best to replace them with the money we have. The smaller bridges on less-used roads, with lesser drainage and travel, we're trying to replace them with steel culverts instead of bridges, so that helps to reduce the expenditure and the inventory."

"We've talked about it before," said Mr. Vacura, "but it's always the lack of money. The expenses get higher and the budget money remains the same or gets lower, and you know, when you've got to budget real careful, and some places really need it, they got to put it there first. I know what the county's situation is. It's hard."



Folks gather for food, prom fun

FORMER HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL Charlie Haag (above) prepared to put more brats onto the grill he was manning behind the gazebo at Centennial Park before the promenade on Saturday. Meanwhile, Pete Zander (below, left) walked the street wearing a sandwich sign and the Fredrickson family, Kaine, Gary and Sarah, sat on a tailgate and prepared to enjoy the promenade.

— Herald photos by Stephanie DeCAMP and Cynthia Haynes



Blocker Academy to offer fighting class

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Snake Blocker, the Apache knife fighter who owns Blocker Academy of Martial Arts in downtown Oberlin, is coming to town for a special class from 1 to 4 p.m. this Sunday featuring guest instructor Professeur Paul-Raymond Buitron III, one of only a handful of people in the world trained in the art of Danse de Rue Savate fighting.

Savate, also known as Boxe Française, is a style of fighting from the 16th and 17th centuries originally practiced by Napoleon's soldiers

and later evolved with other French and Spanish techniques.

"There are less than 45 people alive today that are qualified in this type of fighting in the world," Mr. Blocker said, "and he's one of them. He's the celebrity of European martial arts, and one of the few people in the world doing this. It's going to be the first and maybe the only time that he'll be in Kansas. I think it's going to be really good."

Mr. Blocker said that there is no age limit for the class, dress is casual and those interested in taking it should pre-register by calling him.

If you pre-register, he said, the cost is \$30. At the door, it'll be \$50.

"Savate is highly influenced by Napoleon's army and their combat training during his reign," Mr. Blocker said. "During the Napoleonic wars, there were tons of instructors, but a huge number of them died in the wars, so it dwindled dramatically afterward."

"The current system is strictly boxing. The most common part of the art is the kick boxing, derivative from the old system of self defense. It's popular in history books as how sailors fought back then. It's more

like a longshoreman-type sport.

"It was a rare sport then because it was unpopular to use your feet and considered a dirty way of fighting. They fought dirty with their foot, with their walking sticks and with knives, and they would use those razors that you shave your face with. What the hoodlums at the time would do is have all kinds of tricks where they'd throw a hat in the face of someone and steal from them and run off. As the sport evolved, though, the dirty tricks fell away and the clean sport of Savate came to be."

Dump free at county landfill all next week

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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The Decatur County Landfill will have a free week for dumping again this year, from April 29 to May 4, county commissioners decided at their meeting last Tuesday.

Each family will be allowed to bring one free load to the dump, including up to five tires, Commissioner Stan McEvoy said.

Last year, largely due to the debate surrounding the city's health nuisance ordinance and its enforcement by code officer Jan Ackerman, the city and county agreed to have two free dump weeks, but commissioners said that would likely not happen again. Last time there

was a free week at the dump, in late October, Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman estimated that the county lost about \$2,500 to \$3,500 in revenue.

In other business, commissioners:

- Approved a motion to reappoint Lee Don Scott to the fair board.

- Told Connie Grafel, marketing director of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., that they had not made a decision regarding the proposed Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, which would offer a tax rebate for new construction of new businesses and for the remodeling of existing businesses, but that she could tell the

City Council that they were thinking about it when she presented the idea to them later in the week.

- Agreed to vote "yes" for Midwest Energy's proposed self-regulation.

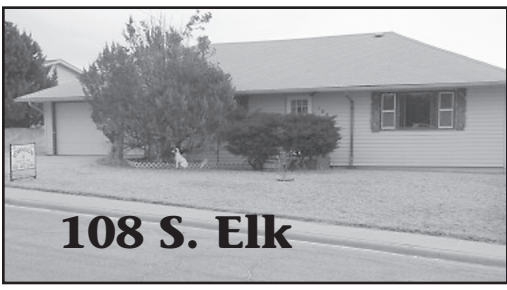
- Heard from quilter and county fair enthusiast Kathy Nauer that the group would like to renovate the open-class building on the fairgrounds before this year's fair.

Mrs. Nauer said that she had already

collected some donations from area farmers, and wanted to know if the county could chip in. The commissioners decided to have her finish collecting private donations before deciding so that they could know how much the board needs.

- Went into closed-door session with Emergency Medical Services Director Linda Manning for 25 minutes to discuss personnel.

Spring into a new home with Johnson Realty



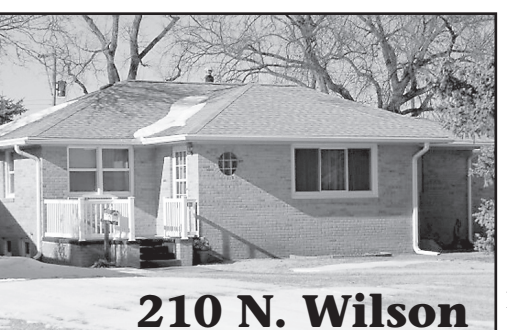
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Handicapped accessible all on one level! 2 bedroom, 2 bath home. Nice kitchen, new floor covering, large sunny room recently built on back with lots of windows and large bath. Fenced back yard with nice shed.



201 E. Hall

Just listed! Lovely 4 bedroom home 1 block from downtown. Living room with gas fireplace, laundry on both levels, 2 baths, hardwood floors under carpet, double car garage, partial finished basement.



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PRICE DRASTICALLY REDUCED! Brick home with 3 bedrooms on main floor, large living room, 2 baths, full basement, good location.

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Shop gets a facelift

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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The Bargain Box Plus, Oberlin's favorite source of nearly new goods, is thriving, the operators say, so much so that the staff is remodeling and plans to celebrate with an open house from Monday to Saturday, May 6 to 11, to show off their new look — and offering some thrifty new deals throughout the week.

Francy Miller, a volunteer who helps organize events at the nonprofit thrift store at 106 N. Beaver Ave., said that the open house is not only to celebrate the store's improvements, but to put to rest some rumors that it's been struggling.

"We took down the sign out front to work on it as part of the remodeling," she said, "and I think people just assumed we were going under, because sales have dropped. But we're not going anywhere."

The store was started in 1994 by Marilou Long and Ann Mines as a nonprofit to recycle clothing and other goods and raise money to help community projects, Mrs. Miller said. It is run by volunteers.

"And a lot of people don't know this," she said, "but if you suffer a personal tragedy like a fire or something, we can always help. You only need come to us."

"Over the years thousands of dollars have been generated through people giving us their excess items. In 2012 alone, more than \$15,000 went to 27 county organizations."

Here's how the math breaks down:

- Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce \$550.
 - Norcatour Library \$750.
 - Norcatour Museum \$250.
 - Norcatour Fire Department \$500.
 - Oberlin Last Indian Raid Museum \$250.
 - Oberlin Library \$550.
 - Oberlin Fire Department \$2,180.
 - Jennings Library \$550.
 - Jennings Czech Museum \$250.
 - Jennings Fire Department \$500.
 - Teens for Christ \$250.
 - Decatur County Food Pantry \$900.
 - Oberlin Rotary Club \$400.
 - American Cancer Society \$100.
 - Salvation Army \$500.
 - Oberlin Arts and Humanities \$500.
 - Oberlin Area Concert Band \$450.
 - Oberlin Business Alliance \$100.
 - Decatur County Amusement Authority \$500.
 - Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. \$2,300.
 - Golden Age Center \$250.
 - Decatur County Helping Hands for Health Care \$250.
 - Decatur Community High after-prom party \$500.
 - Decatur County Emergency Medical Services \$1,000.
 - Creative Movements Gymnastics \$300.
 - Good Samaritan Center \$400.
- If you or an organization you are a part of have a need, Mrs. Miller said, you can call the store at (785) 475-3432 or stop by to fill out an application for help. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Saturday.



Happy Retirement

Come have a cookie and refreshment with
Linda Hunt
on her last day, Tuesday, April 30th at The Bank.



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