



About 30 members of Norton Correctional Facility's Special Operations and Response Team (SORT) provided a demon-

stration of their tactics to the people who attended the 20th anniversary celebration at the facility Thursday.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

# Prison celebrates 20th birthday

Twenty years ago, on Sept. 22, 1987, Norton Correctional Facility became operational. The history, though, goes back to the early 1900s.

Originally a farm, the land, located about five miles east of Norton, was selected as the site of a state sanitarium for the treatment of tuberculosis. One of the stipulations, required by the state, was that the land be donated. Several local citizens each bought an acre of the land, totaling 160 acres. The State bought an additional 80 acres, bringing the total to 240 acres.

Excavation began in 1913, with the first cornerstone laid on June 14, 1914. The sanitarium would boast a living pavilion, boiler house, laundry, kitchen and a 20-acre garden. The first 16 patients arrived Feb. 8, 1915. At its peak of

operation, the sanitarium accommodated 405 patients with 250 employees.

A chapel was built on the grounds of the sanitarium in 1951. It was the result of four years of campaigning by patients, employees and local residents. It is called the All Faith Chapel.

By the early 1960s, the need for tuberculosis hospitals had diminished while additional housing needs for Kansas' mentally handicapped rose. Vacant buildings were converted to the use of these new patients, the first to arrive in July of 1963. By 1967, only 35 tuberculosis patients remained. The sanitarium was officially terminated on June 30, 1968, after operating in conjunction with the State Hospital for five years.

The new name, Norton State Hospital, became effective July 1, 1967. It eventually housed 430

residents and employed 339 staff.

Federal mandates to achieve more active treatment for the mentally handicapped, via community-based, small group homes, gradually replaced the large institutions. A task force, appointed by the governor, began looking for alternative uses for the property.

Through the efforts of local citizens, working with the Kansas Legislature and the Kansas Department of Corrections, it was determined that the physical plant was conducive to serving as a prison. State Hospital buildings were converted into inmate living quarters and Norton Correctional Facility officially became a prison under the governorship of Mike Hayden. The first warden was Louis Bruce.

The site of Norton Correctional Facility has grown to 644 acres. Even though the uses of this property have changed during the past century, none have detracted from the natural beauty of the land, wildlife, grass, trees and shrubs that surround it.

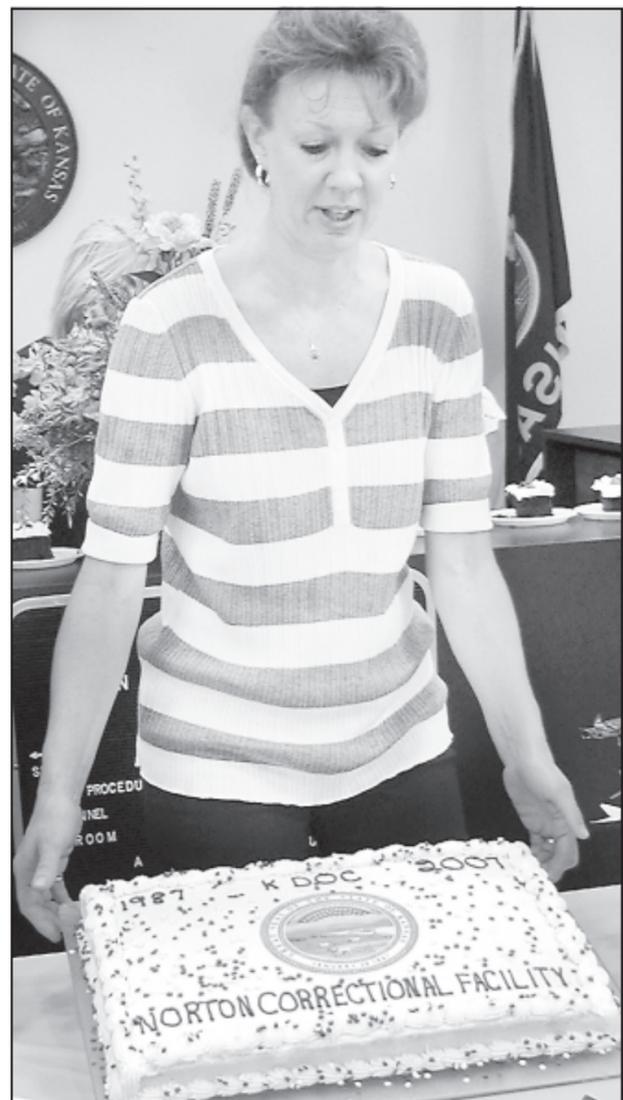
With Jay Shelton as the warden, the facility now includes the Ad-

ministration Building, the Gatehouse or main entry/exit point to the medium security units, a 20,000 square foot industries building, A-Unit which houses 246 inmates includes the extension of the Lathrop Building, B-Unit houses 100 inmates, C-Unit houses 200 inmates, D-Unit houses 168 minimum custody inmates, the Sallyport or main entry/exit for all vehicle traffic, the Education Building, a new supply quonset, the inmate canteen, medium and minimum visiting, the power house, vocations building, the fire station and the greenhouse.

The facility has a capacity to employ 280 staff and to house 707 inmates. Inmates are offered various programs and services including medical, library and recreation services, education and vocational training and mental health counseling.

Inmates are required to have jobs and they provide many different types of work. Eight different inmate work crews work on maintenance projects in Norton and the surrounding communities.

Keeping the facility and public safe is the responsibility of the



Judy Braun, an employee of Norton Correctional Facility, helped serve cake and tea at Thursday's reception honoring the facility on its 20th anniversary. About 100 people attended the lunch, program and reception.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts



Louis Bruce

# Conference a must for rebuilding rural communities

By MARY HOLLE  
Associate Editor of  
The Rawlins County  
Square Deal

Want to learn how to help this area's rural communities survive and grow? Engaging youth and entrepreneurs in their hometowns can be the start to rebuilding rural America.

The Eighth Annual Ogallala Fall Conference, "Rebuilding Rural Communities...Engaging Youth and Entrepreneurs to Create Change," will include youth activities, tours, high-caliber speakers and hands-on workshops to provide a learning experience for youth and adults interested in keeping rural communities vital and growing.

The conference will be held from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 10 in Atwood.

"A huge problem facing towns on the Great Plains is the out-migration of youth...high school

graduates leaving for college and never returning, or young families moving away due to a lack of economic or social opportunities," Darryl Birkenfeld, director of the Ogallala Commons, said. "Even as rural communities pour great resources into our school systems, we never seem to instill in our youth a vital message that we want them to come back home and that we will help them to build careers to be able to live at home."

"Instead of accepting the myth that our youth need to leave home to find opportunities, now is the time to engage youth and youthful entrepreneurs to see the great potential that exists right here at home," he said.

Workshops include: Farm and Community-Scale Wind, Bio-Diesel, Hydrogen and Solar; Service Learning and Youth Councils; How Schools Create Community Change; Local Foods; The High Plains Food Co-op; Nurtur-

ing the Arts and Sense of Place in Your Community; and Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Your Town.

Registration is \$35 per person or early bird registration of \$25 per person. Early bird registration must be received by Monday, Oct. 1. To register and pay online, go to [www.rawlinscounty.info](http://www.rawlinscounty.info) or registration may be made by mail by making checks payable to and sending name, address phone number and e-mail address to

Rawlins County HTC, 112 S. 4th St., Atwood, Kan. 67730.

For student group registration and additional conference information, call Chris Sramek, 785-626-3640.

Sponsors of the conference include: Rawlins County HomeTown Communities, Rawlins County Economic Development, Rawlins County Health Center, Decision Weather, Inc., and others to be announced.

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The Norton Telegram

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# FFA members go to state fair

Three Norton FFA seniors and one graduate student entered projects in the 2007 Kansas State Fair held Sept. 8 through Sept. 16 in Hutchinson.

FFA advisor Garrett Beydler said 80 projects had been entered in the FFA Agricultural Mechanics category. He said the Norton Chapter placed third as a team.

Levi Ninemire entered a gooseneck trailer in the large project construction category (a project costing over \$2,800 to construct). He placed third. His parents are Jim and Peggy Ninemire.

Matt Engel, who graduated in

May, but was eligible because his project was completed in 2007, got first place in the category of projects that cost between \$1,000 and \$2,800 to build. He built a large round bale trailer. He is the son of John and Sheila Engel. Travis Ray, the son of Doug and Kerri Ray, was also entered in this category. He made a utility trailer and placed eighth.

Carson Braun entered a Toyota pick-up bed in the less than \$1,000 to construct category. He earned second place. His parents are Ed Braun and Judy Braun.

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