

Students bring home three awards

Cathy Domsch, executive director of the Bird City Century II Development Foundation was present for the Cheylin School Board meeting on Monday, April 9, to brag on Cheylin students who participated in the third Cheylin Entrepreneurship Fair and the seventh Rawlins County Entrepreneurship Fair.

"I am very proud of our students, and cannot thank Mr. Keltz and the school district enough for their support of the E-Fair," Mrs. Domsch said.

Four of our students attended the Rawlins County E-Fair, she said, and we came home with first, second, and third places.

Jessie Smith, with Papa Charlie's Cornmeal, took first place and took home \$1,000. She was also winner of a lifetime membership in the High Plains Food Coop.

Second place went to Michael Barnett, Hunter's Hotel, earning him \$500. Nakita Schneider, with Nakita's Kitchen, was a third place winner of \$250.

Bison Rx Compounding, owners Jim and Dawn Hampton, award the school of the winner each year \$500. This is the second time in three years that Cheylin has won

this award for implementation of an entrepreneurship program in the Cheylin School District. Mrs. Domsch will visit with the third-sixth grade teachers to see if and what type of program could be implemented.

Neighborhood Revitalization Program

Mrs. Domsch also presented the Neighborhood Revitalization Program to the Cheylin School Board and asked them for their participation.

The program is intended to promote revitalization and development of Cheyenne County by stimulating new construction and rehabilitation. There must be a minimum investment of \$5,000 to receive a tax rebate for commercial or residential construction.

A tax rebate will be based on the increase in assessed value following the first full year of completion. Basically, only the tax abatement/rebate will be assessed on the improvements, so there is not a loss of revenue by participating in this program.

The Cheylin School Board approved signing an interlocal agreement with other participating taxing entities in the county.



WILLY AND RAY MARTINEZ are working on part of the final phases of the restoration of the Robertson Griffin Bacon Memorial building. Century II is turning it into office spaces for new expanding businesses. When finished they

will maintain 4-6 businesses. One office is occupied by the Fort Hays Small Business Development Center Outreach Office. Applications for the remaining spaces are available at the Century II Office.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez

Revitalization tax program explained at board meeting

By Karen Krien

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Helen Dobbs, Cheyenne County Development Corporation director, was at the St. Francis Board of Education meeting on Thursday evening and at the commissioners' meeting the following morning. Her mission was to explain the Neighborhood Revitalization-Tax Rebate Program.

The plan, she said, is to promote the revitalization and development of the county by stimulating new construction and the rehabilitation, conservation or redevelopment of areas. The promotion is done by offering incentives which includes tax rebates.

She said there must be a minimum of \$5,000 invested to receive a tax rebate for commercial or residential. The rebate will be based on the increase in assessed value following the first full year of completion. The tax rebate is a refund of the property taxes which are paid on the actual value added to the property.

A qualifying improvements includes new construction, rehabilitation and additions.

Some of the benefits of the program includes:

- Provides incentives for improvements.
- Doesn't interfere with current property tax revenues.
- Creates new long-term tax revenue with creating a fiscal burden for cities, schools and county.
- Helps create jobs because, historically, jobs follow development.
- Helps reverse the outward

migration.

- Helps stabilize land values.
- Provides a limited window of opportunity for participation.
- Will encourage housing, commercial and industrial development.

Mrs. Dobbs said both Rawlins and Sherman counties, bordering Cheyenne County, have adopted the program. By joining, said Rod Klepper, Bird City, the message is "this county wants to grow." If we don't join, he said, if I were looking to come to the county, I don't think I would build here.

Dolores Jenik, county treasurer, was present at the commissioners' meeting and said she was concerned that once the full taxes were due, people wouldn't realize how much they were. Mrs. Dobbs said that program is a rebate - in other words, the people pay their taxes and then the county gives the rebate, noting each year, the rebate is less.

Rob Schiltz, St. Francis Schools superintendent, said it would affect the board's capital outlay fund, the local option budget and recreation commission budget. He said he personally was not for the program.

Commissioner Dale Patton looked at it as a long-term investment. However, he noted that established businesses won't have the advantage.

Commissioner and businessman, Andy Beikman, said now he can expand his business with the tax discount.

Mrs. Dobbs said there are a number of counties that have been

enrolled in the program for several years. One of those counties is Rooks County. Roger Hrabe, director of the Rooks County Economic Development, said since adopting the program in 2001, over 468 applications have been processed and the county has had well over \$2 million of added assessed value in the county.

From 1995 through 1999, there were 29 new homes built in Rooks County. After the implementation of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, there have been 44 new homes constructed between 2000 and 2005; and 38 new homes from 2006 to 2008.

The plan has also given the county a way to offer some financial incentives to retail businesses.

Having the plan, he said, has given the county the tool to offer incentives and several new retail businesses located in Rooks. The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, he said, was the difference between locating in our county or not.

Cathy Domsch, Century II director located in Bird City, said that she and her board obviously support the plan. We look at it as we do not lose but will gain revenue.

Anyone who is thinking about starting a new business or building a new home or adding on to their business or home should stop by the Cheyenne County Development office in St. Francis or the Century II office in Bird City and talk to the directors. They have additional information and are willing to do the paperwork required.



JEFFRY SMITH was in Mike Indermuhle's backyard in McDonald playing with two eight-week-old Toy miniature Australian Shepherd puppies. Jeffry's mother was giving them shots and said they are soon to be ready for sale.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez

Commissioners meet with nursing home administrator

By Karen Krien

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The Cheyenne County Commissioners met with the Good Samaritan Village administrator and a Village board member on Friday at the regular commissioners' meeting.

Jeff Paulsen, Village administrator, and Glenn Isernhagen, Village advisory board member, were concerned about comments made at the March 30 commissioners' meeting. They said they didn't think that, if the county took over the Village, that the fire marshal would make the county fix additional equipment. The fire marshal had already signed off on the nursing home saying that it was in compliance.

Commissioner, Dale Patton,

who had made the statement in the prior meeting, still said that he thought that when another person takes over, there could be more regulations to meet. "I've seen it happen," he said.

Andy Beikman, commissioner, said that there is asbestos along with the heat and air conditioning system that could pose a problem. How many thousands of dollars are these replacements and repairs going to cost us? I am looking at the worst-case scenario and hoping for the best.

Mr. Paulsen suggested that he bring out an inspector from the Kansas Department of Aging to talk to the commissioners about their concerns.

In the April 12 issue of *The Saint Francis Herald* and *Bird City Times*, the article had stated that the nursing home needed to be "bulldozed."

Mr. Isernhagen said he considered this remark as a "slap in the face." My dad, he said, helped carry bricks to build the place.

It would be nice to have a new facility, Mr. Patton said, but it comes with a big cost. It is your (Mr. Paulsen's and Mr. Isernhagen's) and the residents' tax money that will be subsidizing the nursing home.

The other problem was with the Society profit sharing with county. If the county is going to pay for the expenses of the nursing home

and apartments, they felt like there should be some sort of profit sharing. Randy Fitzgerald, the Society's director of operations, had briefly stopped by two weeks ago and said that his board said there would be no profit sharing.

"This (profit sharing) is a deal breaker," Mr. Patton said. "If we are going to be responsible for the property, then why can't we share some of the profits?"

We need the facility, Mr. Patton said. It provides a much needed service in the area but we want something that will be suitable for a long time."

The commissioners noted that Mr. Fitzgerald was supposed to bring a contract to the commis-

sioners on March 15. Mr. Paulsen suggested that if the commissioners have an idea of something they need, then it needs to be submitted to the Society in writing. Mr. Patton said they would have something written up and sent to the Good Samaritan Society, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Paulsen and Mr. Isernhagen.

Later in the meeting, the subject of the nursing home came up again. Ernie Ketzner, commissioner, said, the people have voted to subsidize the Village up to 6 mills (approximately \$200,000) a year. In 10 years, that is \$2 million. That would go a long way toward building a new facility.

At a prior meeting, Mr. Beik-

man said he had thought, if there would be an addition onto the high school to include a grade school and new gym, then the grade school building could be torn down. This would leave an ideal spot to build a nursing home and assisted living. It would be within walking distance to the grocery store and post office, across the street from the park and on Main Street when there are parades and other activities.

We only have eight months before we are supposed to acquire the Village for \$1 from the Good Samaritan Society, Mr. Beikman said. I don't see how we can possibly get everything worked out in that time.