

Kids prepare for dance recital, health fair

By Sharon Corcoran

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Tights and leotards abound, the slippers are pointing, the shoes are tapping, as students in Jessica Kannady's Right Combination Dance Studio prepare for their spring recital.

The performance, planned for Friday through Sunday, May 2-4, has the theme "Dancing Through Time," Kannady said; all the songs have "time" in the title.

"Where do I come up with this stuff?" she asked rhetorically. "My brain is working all the time."

Songs planned include "Back in Time," performed by Huey Lewis and the News, from the movie "Back to the Future," "Step in Time" from the film "Mary Poppins" and "Love Gets Me Every Time," performed by Shania Twain.

The dancers also will perform at the Sherman County Health Fair at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 2. The little ones will do the Freeze, Kannady said, a routine where they freeze whenever the music stops. The older students will demonstrate the Cupid Shuffle, she said, which is similar to the Electric Slide.

About 100 students are learning ballet, tap and jazz dancing in the Goodland studio, she said, and 35 in Burlington. Classes are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening in Goodland and Monday in Burlington.

Kannady said she has students from age 3 to adults, including nearly a dozen 7- to 9-year-olds in their first year of dance. That's unusual, she said, since none of the new students are the little ones. It's neat to have so many who decided to come in and start learning, she added.

Ten boys are dancing this year, she said, which is awesome. Only four joined the classes last year and five the year before, she said, adding that this is the biggest group of boys she has ever had.

The boys always have their own song at the recital, she said; this year, they will dance to "Step in Time," and perform with the girls to "Love Gets Me Every Time."

The adult tappers are a blast, Kannady said, and it's a big group, 12 dancers. They will perform to "Back in Time" at the recital, she said, adding that they kind of stole the show last year.

The 11 women dressed like old ladies and Travis Witman dressed as an old man, she said, for their performance to "Shake, Rattle and Roll. They're a fun group, willing to do about anything, she said.

Kannady gets excited as she talks about the studio's activities and students, and her enthusiasm seems to rub off, or it goes both ways. She took 12 girls to a dance convention in Denver in November, where they had the opportunity to work with professional choreographers and teachers from Los Angeles and watch the teachers perform.

"When they saw something they liked," Kannady said, "they would go, 'Oh, Miss Jessica, did you see that?'"

"It's good for me to see them get so excited;



Instructor Jessica Kannady (above) reminded Talanie Reicks (middle) and Molly Hernandez of their dance moves Wednesday in class. After taking a break for the holidays, they were just starting to get back in the swing of things. The boys (left, from left, Hagen Hoss, Darby Seeger and Landon Reicks, were down on bended knee while practicing their routine to "Love Gets Me Every Time." The students in Kannady's the Right Combination Dance Studio, held in the Goodland Activities Center, have been preparing for their spring recital, planned for May 2-4 in the Goodland High School auditorium. They will also perform at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 2, at the Sherman County Health Fair, held at the center.

Photos by Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News

it's fuel for us."

It was good for them to get their eyes opened, Kannady said; sometimes it's easy to get stuck in your own area and own routine. They got to see there are other ideas out there, she said,

and to work with both male and female teachers.

It was a lot of fun for all of them, she said, adding that it has been good for her to see how they have grown as performers since.

Kannady said they have ordered costumes for the May recital and have only 14 weeks to go until then, with one week off for spring break. The year goes fast from here on out, she said.

Commissioners question economic development bills, vacation policy

By Tom Betz

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Questions about bills and reimbursements from the Sherman County Economic Development Council staff were reviewed by the county commissioners Wednesday, and the commissioners agreed the council staff were county employees and subject to the county policies.

The questions were raised by staff members of the Sherman County Clerk's office, and Commissioner Mitch Tiede, new commission chairman, agreed to attend the economic development council's next meeting to talk to them about the employee policies.

Crystal Wright, payroll clerk, said that Jeremy Jennings, economic development director, turned in eight hours of vacation on his last payroll, but that under the county policy he is not eligible to take vacation until he has been on the job for six months.

Tiede asked if each employee is given a policy handbook when they are hired.

Wright said she gives each one a policy manual, and specifically mentions the vacation rules to

each one when she gives them the manual and they complete their paperwork.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said the development council board needs to be informed of the county policies, and suggested that Tiede give each board member a copy of the manual.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas said it was his feeling that if the council did not want to follow the county policies the only choice would be for them to become an independent body.

Rasure said he did not feel the council should be an independent group, but agreed that if the council board does not want to follow the county policies that might be their option.

The economic development council board is made up of 11 people. Seven of those are nominated through an open process and the names are submitted to the county commissioners for approval. The other four positions are appointed from each of the four banks in town, and their nominations are approved by the county commissioners.

Since the council began about six

years ago the city and county have contributed \$50,000 each annually to fund the council. In the first year additional donations were made to the council by county businesses.

The development director and office manager are considered county employees County Clerk Janet Rumpel said, and are subject to the county policies.

Tiede said he would go to the next council meeting, which is tonight, to inform them about the policies and to hand each council member a copy of the employee manual.

Janie Pharis, who handles the bills for the clerk's office, said she had a problem with the fact that the development office got new cell phones without going through the county or asking if more cell phones were available.

She said Jennings went through a different company than the one the county has a contract with, and the cell phone was put under Jennings name rather than the county.

Again Rumpel said this is outside the county policy, and that there might be a conflict of interest with the business relationship between the current chair of the council and

the cell phone company.

"If they want to do that the council would have to be separate from the county," Rasure said.

Another billing issue brought up was that Jennings got a breakfast at McDonald's on his way out of town to a one-day meeting, and paid for it using the county credit card.

Rumpel said the county policy does not pay for meals for a one-day meeting, and that Don Newell, council chairman was upset that the county was not paying for the breakfast.

"It is an Internal Revenue Service ruling," Rumpel said, "dealing with one-day meetings and that if reimbursed it has to be added to their pay

corrections

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to be taxed as income."

Tiede asked to have that explained.

Wright said the county policy is that no meals are paid for on a one-day meeting, but are reimbursed if the employee has to stay overnight.

"Some of the meetings include a meal," Wright said, "but not always. In cases where we go to training meetings and buy lunch or any meal we consider that the normal part of the day and pay for the meals we would have done on a normal basis."

Rumpel said the IRS issued a ruling a few years ago that meetings that did not include an overnight stay were

not something to have meals reimbursed for, and that if reimbursement was made it should be considered as income and to be taxed.

Tiede said he understood how that works, and that he would go to the council meeting to explain the county policy.

Rumpel said these are county employees and that each one is given a policy manual when they are hired, and sign a statement that they understand the policies. She said that is part of the hiring process.

On a related matter the county commissioners approved a recommendation from the development council to raise Helen Dobbs pay to \$11 an hour from \$9.50.

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