

THE NORTON TELEGRAM



Friday

February 20, 2009

Norton, Kansas

Home of Phyllis Annon

Honoring our Norton and Northern Valley FFA Members



See Section B

Briefly

Important school reminders given

Here are some important school dates for Norton Unified School District:

- Monday is the book fair at the Eisenhower Elementary library.
- There will be no school for Norton students next Wednesday. Eisenhower Elementary will be conducting Parent-Teacher Conferences.
- There will also be no school for Norton students next Friday due to the high school state wrestling tournament at Fort Hays State University.

Meals on Wheels needs some help

Volunteers are needed to deliver Meals on Wheels, Feb. 23 through March 1. Call the Norton County Hospital, dietary department, at 785-877-3351.

Norton girl among queen candidates

Amy Husted, Norton, was one of the candidates for Winter Homecoming Queen at Cloud County Community College in Concordia. The king and queen were crowned between the men's and women's basketball games against Pratt

Weather

Forecast:

Tonight - Scattered snow showers before midnight. Cloudy, then gradually becoming partly cloudy with a low around 17. Chance of precipitation is 30%. New snow accumulation of less than a half inch possible. Saturday - Sunny with a high near 41. Saturday Night - Mostly clear with a low around 16. Sunday - Sunny with a high near 52. Breezy with a east wind between 10 and 20 mph.



Kingham report:

Tues., Feb. 17..... Low 29, High 63
 Wed., Feb. 18..... Low 25, High 43
 Thurs., Feb. 19..... Low 16, High 52
 (Readings taken at the Kingham farm 9 miles northwest of Norton)

Prayer

Dear God, help us live as a Christian example for those who are watching us. Amen

'Wow! Look at that!'



Lilly Beikman, Abigail Davis, Anna Lively and Jaida Wright looked at the "Scrap Patch Heart," made by Janice Beale at the Norton Public Library. It, and many others, are on display. Story Page 3. - Telegram photo by Brandy Leroux

Jail overcrowding big concern in Norton

By BRANDY LEROUX
bleroux@nwkansas.com

Sheriff Troy Thomson went before the Norton County Commissioners last Monday to tell them that the county jail is full, and he's having to transport inmates to other area county jails.

"We used to have an average of about five inmates a day," said Sheriff Thomson. "But now it seems there has been a large influx of probationary holdings and the types of cases requiring longer sentences."

The jail capacity is eight, and currently it is housing 10.

"These are all Norton County cases," said Sheriff Thomson. "Some are here waiting hearings, some are here fulfilling their sentences, but none of them are holdings for other counties."

The jail has been at or above capacity before, but only for two or three days. Now, it's been over-capacity for around three weeks, and Sheriff Thomson said it's probably going to be like that for a while.

"I don't see a significant decrease in the near future," he said. "Jail meal costs alone have doubled."

Through an agreement with Osborne

County, inmates that have been sentenced to longer jail times have been transferred to their county jail, and Osborne County deputies meet the Norton County deputies at the half-way point to make the transfer.

Sheriff Thomson said with the amount of inmates and his department being short by one deputy, it has been difficult to find time to interview for a new deputy.

"Right now, it takes one deputy all day to handle visitation and do laundry," said Sheriff Thomson. "And if they're in the jail for visitation and laundry, that's one less deputy I have out patrolling and

taking calls."

Sheriff Thomson said although it costs money to transfer the inmates to another county — such as fuel, wear and tear on the patrol vehicles, deputies' time, and paying another county to take the inmates — it is the only option until the number of inmates decreases. Building a new law enforcement center, which would include a new jail, just isn't feasible right now.

"Generally, you can count on a new jail costing about \$1 million per bed," said Sheriff Thomson. "And with the current economic problems, that just isn't going to happen."

City department heads face budget cuts

By BRANDY LEROUX
bleroux@nwkansas.com

The Norton City Council asked city department supervisors to find ways to reduce their budgets by five percent and have drafts ready to be presented at the next finance committee meeting on March 2.

"This doesn't mean we're going to cut the budgets, this is a 'just in case' thing in case economic conditions worsen," said council member Toby Kuhn. "It's better to have a plan in place ahead of time

rather than waiting until things get really bad then scrambling to cut budgets."

Three department supervisors — Mitch Jones, chief of the city fire department; Dan Bainter, Public Works supervisor; and Pat Morel, chief of police — were asked if they thought that would be enough time to come up with the budget cuts. They all said it should be.

The council passed Resolution #3-2009, which deals with changes to the city employee handbook. At the Feb. 4 city council meeting, council member Jeff

Otter proposed eliminating the extra day off for the New Year's holiday and instead giving an additional discretionary day off, which would be added in 2010; eliminating the first four ranges on the city's pay scale and shifting the remaining ranges up to what is currently range 5 will become range 1; eliminating the positions of Power Plant Operator II and Water/Sewer Plant Operator II; moving Park/Cemetery Supervisor and City Clerk positions down on the pay range by one space; adding evaluation forms and disciplinary forms

to the employee manual; and changing meal allowances from individual meals to a daily total allowance.

Mayor David Corns asked Chief Morel if cars were still being taken and found parked in other places in town. Chief Morel said that hasn't happened in a while.

City Clerk Darla Ellis reminded the council that Chris Land, from Murphy International Development Corporation, will be at the next city council meeting to

(Continued on Page 5)

All in a day's work



Norton County Rural Fire department finished putting out a grass fire Wednesday afternoon on Road W, 13 miles south and west of Norton, and packed up to head back to town. - Telegram photo by Brandy Leroux

Judge keeping eye on measure

Debra Anderson, Norton County District Court Judge, told the Norton County Commissioners this week that she was in Topeka last week to reinforce the need for judges within the western Kansas area. She said legislation has been introduced, about every other year to eliminate judge positions in western Kansas, and move them to eastern Kansas. Judge Anderson serves on a legislative group that assures there is at least one judge per county.

She indicated the bill would be introduced this session and that the group she serves with will be monitoring bills closely.

Norton County Road and Bridge supervisor Tom Brannan said there are several areas in the county that are having general work done, mainly from the heavy rains, and that the Federal Emergency (Continued on Page 5)