



**MOTHER GOOSE**, played by Becky Ayers (above), read a story to kids at Marie Berls' day care last week during the Week of the Young Child. Dani Rouse (below) made a funny hat at the center Thursday. —Photos by Kimberly Davis

## Children have fun together

It was all about the kids last week as several Oberlin day care centers celebrated the Week of the Young Child with "theme days."

Marie Berls, who runs a day care out of her house, said all five centers in the child care organization took part, including day care centers and preschools run by herself, Becky Ayers, Alice Stanley, Sarah Howland and Tami Touselee.

Mrs. Berls said Paula Bolt in Jennings is also part of the group.

Monday was Bubble Day, Tuesday was Nursery Rhyme Day, Wednesday it was Rainbows, on Thursday, Hats and on Friday it was Bugs.

She said the kids got to do arts and crafts using the themes, such making crowns with ribbons, foam shapes and more glued to the front, back and inside on Thursday.

On Bubble Day, kids at one center made pictures with colored bubbles and on Nursery Rhyme Day, they had a visit from Mother Goose.

Ms. Goose spent time each day reading books to the kids, including one where they got to



join in making animal sounds. It is important to take time out to celebrate kids, said Mrs. Berls. Often they get rushed along or pushed aside, but this was really their week, she said.

# New sewer to cost city \$1.6 million

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

The Oberlin City Council approved a bid of almost \$1.6 million from a Nebraska company to build a sewer treatment facility for the city during its meeting Thursday night.

The city received three bids with three alternates. Thaniel Monaco, the engineer with Miller and Associates who has been working on the project, said there weren't any errors in the bids and almost all came in lower than his estimates.

The base bid includes a synthetic liner on the sides of the lagoons and a natural liner on the bottom, which is compacted soil. The alternate bids include a liner on the sides and on the bottom of the lagoons.

The lowest bid came in at \$1,319,471 for a base and \$1,593,295 for an alternate from Midlands Contracting of Kearney, Neb. The second bid came in at \$1,363,980 for a base bid and \$1,601,568 for the alternate was from BSB Construction from Curtis, Neb. The third bid came in at \$1,786,934 for a base bid and \$2,175,962 for the alternate from Smokey Hill LLC of Salina.

The council approved the bid of \$1,593,295 from Midlands, which included the high-density polyethylene liner.

A large part of the project is dirt work, said Mr. Monaco, and the bids were lower than they were last year.

Initially, he said, they thought they would have to line the lagoons under Kansas Department of Health and Environment requirements be-

## Area people to get jobs

The Oberlin City Council approved a worksheet Thursday which named local businesses to work on the building of new sewer lagoons.

Thaniel Monaco, engineer for the project, said all contractors have to make an effort to use rural, small, minority and women-owned businesses under rules set by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

With almost any grant, he said, contractors have to use these kinds of businesses as (See LOCAL on Page 10A)

cause of the potential of contamination to ground water. The city doesn't actually have to put in a liner, other than a natural one of compacted dirt, he said.

The third lagoon is the cleanest, said City Administrator Gary Shike, and would be the one the city would probably go with a natural liner, but it is also the closest to the ground water and has the most pressure.

Since the bids came in under what (See SEWER on Page 10A)

# Ranch ready to begin taking boys on Monday

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

After being closed for a month, Sappa Valley Youth Ranch is set to open under new management Monday with 21 boys.

Dick Kelsey of Goddard, owner and operator of King's Camp Inc., has taken over the facility, renting it from the City of Oberlin. In March, the city was notified that Clarence M. Kelley Youth Services would end its lease for the facility. Mr. Kelsey, who also serves as a state legislator, took over the facility on April 1.

Last Wednesday, Mr. Kelsey met with ministers from the area and future staff at the ranch in the high school cafeteria.

The goal of the facility, he said, is to help young men change their lives. A real change happens only when there is a spiritual change.

The ranch will be a level 5 facil-

ity, he said, with young men assigned through the state Juvenile Justice Authority. Eventually, said Mr. Kelsey, he plans to open another home in Oberlin which will be a level 4.

Mr. Kelsey said he has hired his staff, including a chaplain, Pastor Dan Rohm from Living Word Fellowship Church in Hoxie.

Part of the future plans for the ranch, he said, is to redo the roof on one of the existing buildings and make it into a church for the boys. Mr. Kelsey said the city, school district and he will each pay for one-third of the new roof.

He said he has checked into prices and the materials will cost around \$6,000. He has asked for volunteers to help put the roof on and check the setup for a church.

Work days will be set up to get the (See RANCH on Page 10A)

# Community brainstorms for future

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

More than 100 people worked in small groups Thursday night to brainstorm ideas for Decatur County's future.

The "Community Conversation" kicked off the public phase of a project that started last fall when Terry Woodbury, a consultant and president of Kansas Communities LLC, proposed setting up a 10-year plan for the county with about four main goals.

In just under four hours, participants ate hamburgers cooked by the steering committee and got to discuss three topics, including quality of life for kids, citizen engagement and community assets.

Before the meeting, Mr. Woodbury, who has been paid \$3,000 raised by the steering committee, went around the county, talking to groups and conducting 43

## Lots of ideas get generated

At the "Community Conversation" Thursday night, more than 100 people came up with ideas and things that can be improved in Decatur County.

- Some of those included:
- A Big Brother/Big Sister program.
  - Adult mentors.
  - A parenting class.
  - An after-school program.
  - Improvements for City Park.
  - A new swimming pool.
  - Integrated activities that get

adults and kids working and playing together, like golf, hot rods, black powder shooting, a bowling alley, a roller rink, frisbee golf and hiking trails.

- Having a block person on each block, someone people could go to in each neighborhood.
- A summer and weekend meal program for kids.
- A grandparent program.
- Creating jobs.
- The Sappa Lake project.
- The movie theater.

interviews.

At the meeting Thursday, each table was to come up with ideas for areas outlined in a survey the committee collected, which was fol-

lowed by open microphone time.

Mary Jo Lohofener said her group suggested making more use of things that the county already has, like the carnival. Why is it that the

rides only run once a year? they asked. Why not open them a couple times a year, like running a couple rides before the races. The rides are already paid for, the group said.

Another suggestion was made for walking trails at Sappa Park, which is in the works. Maybe people could pick up the trash they see while walking at the park, said Susan May's group.

Maybe the park could be connected to the city with a walking/bike trail, said Karen Metcalf.

Mr. Woodbury generated a survey with "20 Clues for Community Survival." At least 153 surveys were compiled and the figures were handed out on Thursday.

The group rated the top two community strengths as a strong presence of traditional institutions and evidence of community pride. There (See IDEAS on Page 10A)

# Ambulance director hands in resignation

The Decatur County ambulance director told commissioners last week that he would be leaving at the end of the month for a job in Coffeyville.

Director Patrick Pomeroy said he hasn't been putting his all into his work lately. He said he told himself that when it got to that point, he would leave.

Mr. Pomeroy was hired four years ago to fill the full-time position, replacing John Barrett.

Mr. Pomeroy is also an Oberlin City councilman. When there is an open seat on the council, the mayor appoints someone to fill it with council approval.

The director said he had only told a few people before he told the commissioners. After the meeting, he said, he would start making phone calls.

Mr. Pomeroy asked how long

the commissioners wanted him to stay on the job. His new position starts May 1, but he said he can stay until the end of the month.

In Coffeyville, he said, he will be the lead paramedic instructor, teaching students to be paramedics.

Commissioner Doyle Brown said Mr. Pomeroy needs to let the assistant director, Linda Manning, know what is going on. When she feels ready to take over, Mr. Brown said, then she can.

Mr. Pomeroy said he would be more than happy to help search for his successor.

The position, said Commissioner Ralph Unger, must be advertised before anyone can be hired.

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