

Co-op reports good year

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

After several tough years, the Decatur Co-operative Association celebrated an upswing in businesses by handing out patronage checks worth almost \$200,000 at its annual meeting at The Gateway last Tuesday.

The co-op set aside \$665,000 for patronage dividends, with farmers and ranchers receiving 6.43 cents per bushel on wheat sold through the co-op, 6.01 cents on other grains and 4.5 percent on all supplies, including fuel.

Of that, patrons got 30 percent in cash and the rest in equity, which will be paid to the members later, assuming business stays good. So far, officials said, the co-op has paid out equity to members through 1994.

Sales for the year were up by \$7.3 million and last year was the first time sales have exceeded \$25 million — a little under \$15 million in grain and almost \$10 million in supplies. The year before, sales totaled just \$17.7 million.

Greg Daughhete, a certified public accountant with Lindburg & Vogel of Hays, said that the increased price of grain allowed farmers to buy more fertilizer and fuel, which helped increase profits.

The better harvest also helped, he said, with farmers putting more grain in storage.

"It was a very, very good year for this co-op," he said.

He attributed the increases to support from the farmer-members, but mostly to the help of Mother Nature for providing moisture for the crops.

The strong balance sheet, which showed a \$600,000 increase in members' equity, is a direct result of better crops, he said.

"The company continues to be strong," Daughhete said. "Congratulations on a good year."

Co-op Manager Karol Evans agreed.

"Our year did turn out to be a really good year," he said. "For the first time in a long time, we had a wheat crop."

He also agreed with Mr. Daughhete as to the real reason for the increased business.

"It finally rained," he said. "The last time we had a good, or normal, year was 2000."

"Our farmers in this area just need a little bit of help from Mother Nature to do what they can do."

Mr. Evans said that the co-op had purchased a Jennings elevator and leased one from Lohofener Grain in Oberlin over the last couple of years, but it wasn't until recently that there was grain to fill them.

He said he wasn't going to try to predict the future, however, because while the moisture has been good so far this year, the winds aren't helping to keep the moisture in the soil.

The best news, he said, is that the organization is paying more back to the farmers this year.

The co-op helps the towns it serves by providing jobs for 32 full-time and some part-time help with a payroll of \$1.134 million. It pays \$113,000 a year in property taxes, he said. They have locations at Oberlin, Kanona, Jennings, Danbury, Neb., Lenora, Herndon and Ludell.

"The farmers and co-op really do play a big role in community development," Mr. Evans said.

About 200 people — members of the co-op and their families and friends — ate barbecued pork, baked beans, potato salad, chips and chocolate cake before the business meeting. Members re-elected Rodney Bryan and Chris Bailey to the board. Scholarships, safe-driving awards and awards for years of service were handed out.



THIS PHOTO of Goodland Police Chief Ray Smee holding a man at gunpoint won Tom Betz of *The Goodland Star-News* a first-place in the Kansas Press Association's Better Newspapers Contest.

* Awards won by area papers

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Tom Betz of *The Goodland Star-News* took first place in news photography for weekly papers, circulation up to 1,750, with a picture of the police chief holding a gun on a man who was suspected of having explosives and drugs in his home and who reportedly had threatened officers.

The Herald also received honorable mention in sports features for a story about the undefeated Decatur Community High football team of 1955 by managing editor Kimberly Davis.

"Great use of old and new photos," the judge said. "Tremendous research and great use of updates on the whereabouts now of members of that team, and their recollections of that season."

The Telegram won a second-place award for editorial writing by former publisher Cynthia Haynes; a third place for government and political writing by Ms. Monier for a story about Norton County finding out that it owned a school building; a third place for a photo package on the Norton County Fair by Ms. Monier, former publisher Dick Boyd, Carolyn Plotts, Susie Marble and Charlotte Stephenson; a third place

for headline writing; and an honorable mention for column writing by Liza Deines, who writes about her youth during the Great Depression.

The Star-News also won a second place in column writing by Kathryn Burke; a second for a sports photo by Sharon Corcoran of cowboys grabbing hold of a wild cow's tail during a milking contest at a rodeo; a third place for news and writing excellence; an honorable mention for series writing by Mrs. Burke; and an honorable mention for headline writing.

The Colby Free Press won a second-place award for feature writing by small dailies for a story about a boy and his dog by editor Patty Decker.

The judge said, "Nice feature that relates importance of connecting and bonding."

Other area newspaper winning awards included *The Rawlins County Square Deal* in Atwood, which took first place for its editorial pages for weekly papers with a circulation of 1,751-4,000.

The Phillipsburg Review won an honorable mention in sports photography for weekly newspapers circulation 1,751-4,000.

School board members deny two early retirement requests

The Oberlin School Board denied two requests for early retirement incentives for teachers at its meeting Monday, April 10.

The incentive means the teachers will get 95 percent of the average of their salary over the last three years paid in reducing percentages over a five- or 10-year period, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt.

Board members said they wouldn't pay the incentive, but that doesn't mean that the teachers still can't choose to retire.

At the March meeting, Cynthia Matson had sent a letter requesting early retirement after 37 years with the district. Mrs. Matson said she started teaching in August 1969. The district would pay around \$36,986.

The board decided to table the

decision until the April meeting to see if anyone else requested the early retirement.

Tuesday, April 4, Mr. Glodt said the board had received a letter from high school counselor Nita Lavielle, who has taught and been a counselor in the district for 17 years and started in August 1989. She taught for 13 years outside of the district before that. The district would pay around \$44,694.

Three years ago, the board approved early retirement for Sharon Addleman. The next year, they denied requests from Audrey Pavlicek and then Maria Sanden.

Board members said the problem is that the district has to pay part of the cost of the early retirement. At a time when the district has been cutting back, they said, it's hard to justify the expense.

Water tower to be inspected

The Oberlin City Council learned Thursday that the city's water tower will be inspected at the beginning of May.

The water tower is inspected every year on an alternating schedule, said City Administrator Gary Shike. Last year, the tower was inspected from the outside, he said, so this year it will be drained down and the inside will be inspected.

Mr. Shike said light bulbs which are burnt out or that have been broken will be replaced. There are no lights on the tower now, and there haven't been any for a while, said Mr. Shike. He said he didn't know how long. The town should have red clearance lights on top of the tower and on the catwalk, said Mr. Shike. There is also a flood light on the north side of the catwalk pointing at

the Oberlin sign.

The council discussed a contract for emergency services at the request of the county emergency preparedness director, Bert Cool. That way, said Mr. Shike, The Gateway can be used in case of an emergency for a triage center, shelter or otherwise. City Attorney Steve Hirsch said the director should be able to get the needed form off the web.

* Walking trails at Sappa Park part of plans

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the trails. He said he and his wife have ordered a six-foot bench for the trail also. That way people can stop and rest and enjoy nature.

Anyone who wants to make a donation, or fixtures like the benches, can get a receipt from the city so it can be tax deductible, he said. Mr. Walter said anyone who wants to make a cash donation can give it to the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, noting that it is for the Sappa Park trails. The address of the chamber office is 104 S. Penn Ave. Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Mr. Unger said he thought maybe they could get some donations on chemicals to spray the weeds. Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley said they would need to wait to spray until some of the grass comes up. He said he would see what kind of weeds come up.

Mr. Walter said the group has some goals for this first year. They include maintenance and mowing of the trails, developing maps and markers, installing three fire pits,

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Talked with people working on the walking trails at Sappa Park about the county possibly helping with mowing and spraying for weeds. Story at left.

- Talked with the interim ambulance director and current director about making a smooth transition at the end of the month. Story on Page 5A.

- Approved the purchase of \$7,000 in chemicals for the noxious weed department. Story to come.

with two on the island and one west of the shelter house, creating sitting areas and cleaning out the draw east of the shelter house, which has been used as a trash dump.

* Home to open in former residence

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ability, he said.

"The bottom line here is that our zoning code, frankly, is not current with the changes in the state and federal law," wrote Mr. Hirsch. "Obviously, state and federal law changes override our zoning code, and the City of Oberlin is without authority to restrict the placement of an alcohol-drug treatment facility within our 'R' Zone."

Councilman Ray Ward asked what purpose there would be to discuss the issue. Basically, it just would be a time to vent, said Councilman Jay Anderson.

Mr. Shike said the firm is planning to hold a public meeting here, but nothing had been set.

Jennifer Unger, who lives across the street with her husband Greg and

their son, said she thought a lack of information about the home caused them to be anxious about it. She said they just don't know enough about it, although they are trying to be positive about the change.

"These are the boys who have nowhere else to go," said Susan May, "and as a neighborhood and community, if we can save these kids and integrate them back into society, just think of the good we will have accomplished."

"If we don't invest the dollars and energy into these boys now, then we will pay the price in the long run for paying for their prison time."

It is important for King's Alcohol and Treatment Center to have a dialogue with the neighborhood and community to get rid of fears, she said.

City buys truck for electrical crew

The Oberlin City Council decided to buy a digger truck for the electrical department for \$131,174 at a meeting Thursday.

City Foreman Dan Castle said he received three bids for new trucks, but he wanted to get one more.

The crew uses the digger truck, equipped with a big auger, to plant power poles. The crew also has used it to dig holes for trees.

The first bid was for a Pittman from Hopkins, Minn., for \$155,613, Mr. Castle said, the second for a Telelect from Commerce City, Colo., for \$147,035, and the third for an Altec from Birmingham, Ala., for \$131,174.

Mr. Castle said that the last time he talked with the council about a truck, they suggested he find a new one around for \$120,000 to \$130,000.

The crew has had their eyes on the Telelect, he said, but the City of Norton just purchased an Altec and really like it.

The drawback to the Altec, said Mr. Castle, is that a lot of it is electronic and when there are problems, it has to be hooked up to

machines to be fixed. The good thing is that there are mechanics close by who have been trained to work on them if there is a problem.

The city can do a lease-purchase or pay in cash from the equipment and electric funds, said City Administrator Gary Shike.

Originally, said Mr. Castle, the council suggested a used digger truck for around \$80,000 but so far he hasn't been able to find even one used machine.

The council approved the purchase of the Altec digger. The group asked Mr. Castle to ask the company what the cash discount would be and what he could get for the 1982 digger truck they have now. The other idea was to sell the old one, but not until the new one is here this fall.

Mr. Castle said a circuit breaker and addition to the tower at the power plant have been put in for the new transformer. The transformer was to be put installed on Tuesday, Mr. Castle said, and the city will have to generate power while it is being hooked up.

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