



Oberlin gets grant for airport

The City of Oberlin has won a \$47,500 grant to pay for an environmental assessment needed for the airport expansion project, Congressman Jerry Moran's office said last week.

The city and its airport committee plan to add a 7,000-foot runway at the Oberlin Municipal Airport north of town to accommodate corporate jets and other larger aircraft. The project was suggested by Bus and Coach International of Jennings, which hopes to use the airport to ship parts and bring in buyers.

Recently, the city received word of a \$1 million commitment to the project from the Kansas Department of Transportation.

The city also got just under \$100,000 for an Automated Weather Observation System from the state, said City Administrator Gary Shike. It will be installed before June 2009.

"The importance of air service

to northwest Kansas cannot be overstated," said Rep. Moran. "The airport's growth will benefit both residents and businesses in the area. It is good to see this project moving forward."

The latest grant, said Mr. Shike, will pay to bring experts in to look over the ground where the new runway will go. They have to make sure that the airport improvements won't disturb Indian burial grounds or harm protected animals, among other things, or that the noise won't affect people.

The city had to do an environmental assessment before building the new sewage treatment plant south of town, he said.

The assessment, said Mr. Shike, will be handled by BWR, the city's consulting engineers for the project. It shouldn't take very long, he said, then the report will be sent to the Federal Aviation Administration.

ArtFest returns for fourth year this weekend

For the fourth year, a volunteer committee plans to give artists in northwest Kansas, southwest Nebraska and eastern Colorado a place to display their work.

Whether the artist is a high school student or a professional who has sold several pieces, the High Plains ArtFest at The Gateway this weekend is the place to display their best work.

Connie Grafel, a committee member, said the group collected works last week for the event. Thursday, they will set up over 200 paintings, pictures, sculptures and other pieces in the arena at The Gateway.

At 7 p.m. Friday, patrons will come for the opening gala, which is a time for people to come in and see the art, decide if they want to buy any and socialize.

There will be appetizers, drinks and the McCook String Quintet will perform, said Ms. Grafel.

For the past few months, people have had the opportunity to buy

tickets to the gala at \$100 a couple. If they decide to buy something from the show, she said, that amount will be deducted from the price.

This year, said Ms. Grafel, because of the timing, there will be more pieces done by high school students than in the past.

The ArtFest, she said, is really the only venue for young, rural and regional artists to show their work. The closest places, besides this event, said Ms. Grafel, are in Denver, Hays and North Platte.

She said students at McCook Community College will bring lots of pieces this year, too.

The event, said Ms. Grafel, was initiated by Ron Temple, then a committee formed and the High Plains ArtFest started.

Those who aren't at the gala on Friday can see the pieces from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Anyone with art in the show that isn't sold needs to pick it up by Sunday afternoon after closing.

Public meeting set for new center

Everyone is invited to a public meeting at the Golden Age Center at the end of the month to talk about plans for a new senior center, bowling alley and theater.

Greg Lohofener, who is working on the project, said both Randy Hrabe with Pioneer Country Development out of Hill City and Dave Barber with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development office out of Hays plan to attend the informational session.

Mr. Lohofener said the group is

working on an application which would make 70 percent of any donation to the project tax deductible. Basically, if someone gave \$1,000 to the project, said Mr. Lohofener, 70 percent or \$700 of that could be counted as a state tax credit.

The project hasn't been approved for the program yet, he added.

At the meeting, said Mr. Lohofener, the group will be ready to talk about costs for the proposed building. It will start at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 29

Library ordinance might change board

The Oberlin City Council will be looking at a proposed charter ordinance to change the residency requirements for people serving on the library board, allowing people who live outside the city limits to serve.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the council could vote on the ordinance at the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway. It requires a "super majority," a two-

thirds vote, rather than just half the council, he said.

The board is set up by state law, said Mr. Shike, which says that all the members have to live in the city limits. That's why a charter ordinance is needed to get the city out from under the state statute, said Mr. Shike.

There are seven people on the board, he said. One of them, Duane (See CITY on Page 12)

WITH THEIR HANDS stretched out, Hannah Jones and Kaitlyn Howland (above) tried to convince the three little ducks to come see them. Alex Eskew (below) held one of the little yellow ducks during his preschool class at Kid's First Learning Center last week.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Young children honored

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
kldavis@nwkans.com

In honor of Week of the Young Child, which started Monday, a handful of business people met with child care professionals to talk about the importance of kids starting to learn at a young age and to hear about area day-care providers and preschools.

Tanya Koehn and Joanna Chesterman, with the Northwest Kansas Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, and Karen Merryman with Smart Start of Northwest Kansas, were hosts for a lunch at the LandMark Inn last Monday.

Although several business people and public officials had been invited, only five managed to show up, including Linda Wade, with The Bank; Marilyn Gamblin, director of the county health department; Patti Skubal, county emergency management director; school Superintendent Pat Cullen; and Kimberly Davis of *The Oberlin Herald*.

A child's brain, said Mrs. Koehn, is 80 percent of an adult's size by the time they are 3. That's why it's important to push early childhood education, she said.

Not only is it important to have child care, she said, but quality child care with a good adult-to-child ratio. The state allows



child care providers to take up to three infants, said Mrs. Koehn, but does that mean your child is getting

quality care?

At the community college in Colby, she said, they have parents

bringing children to class because

the students can't find day care. (See EARLY on Page 12)

Parents feel the shortage of day-care centers here

With a shortage of day-care centers in Decatur County, officials say, some people are having to quit their jobs and stay home with their kids.

Marilyn Gamblin, county health administrator, said one young woman she knows who has a young child has been unable to find a day-care provider at all. She has quit her job and now stays at home.

Currently, she added, the county has eight licensed day-care providers and two preschools.

Each provider can only take so many children, said Ms. Gamblin, up to 10 for one adult and up to 12 for two, but the total depends on how old those children are.

Basically, under state rules, she said, it really depends on how many younger children the provider has. The younger the kids, the fewer one person can watch.

"We just don't have enough people to care for babies," said Ms. Gamblin. "Those people who are having babies just aren't able to find anywhere to take them."

She said she has put up fliers around town asking for people who are interested in doing day care to call the Health Department. She said she's had one call, which she turned over to the state-licensed surveyor out of WaKenney. The surveyor comes in and does orientation, helps with paperwork, does a pre-interview to make sure the person will fit and then also does yearly surveys of all day-care centers.

Those yearly surveys, said Ms. Gamblin, are regulatory, but the idea isn't to find something (See COUNTY on Page 12)

Learning a craft

*Early learning helps keep kids out of trouble

(Continued from Page 1)
Of those people who can find child care, 41 percent don't have anyone for backup, said Mrs. Koehn, and that number is probably higher here. Sixty-seven percent of parents using child care outside of their home say they have no where to take their children if they are sick. That means, she said, that parents use their own sick time when their kids are ill. On average, said Mrs. Koehn, people pay \$1.60 per child per hour or \$72 a week. Some pay more and some less.

The bottom line, she said, is that for every \$1 spent on early childhood education, over \$7 is saved later in life on special education. Kids who were taken care of and stimulated early on are less likely to be juvenile offenders, said Mrs. Koehn. They are less likely to be pregnant as teenagers, less likely to struggle in school and more likely to graduate from high school.

Part of the problem, said Ms. Merryman, is that people don't see child care as a profession, but it is. Early childcare is important. If employees don't have good options, then employers end up with no one to work for them.

Smart Start, said Ms. Merryman, offers financial help to providers to get the education needed for quality care. They also help with some high-cost equipment to get people started. Providers can borrow equipment until they can afford their own, she said. In Decatur County, she said, they need to find out how to get the word out about day care and early childhood education.

This week, said Mrs. Koehn, is set aside to celebrate children and those who work with kids. It's rewarding to work with children, she said, but it isn't always financially rewarding.

Marie Berls, who has run a day care in Oberlin for 24 years, said the biggest problem here is that there aren't enough day-care providers. Rarely, she said, does a week go by that she doesn't have to turn someone away. If that parent can't find a provider, then they can't work. If the provider gets sick or wants to take a

vacation, where do those kids go? Mrs. Berls said she has four kids on the waiting list now; those people will probably wait at least a year. Since the beginning of the year, she said, she has had to turn away six families, mostly with infants.

Although she is trying to encourage people to get into day care, younger people who don't own their own homes and have to rent a place will fight an uphill battle.

This needs to be a community-wide effort, said Ms. Merryman. Would a forum or something bring people in?

No one knew the answer. "It takes a special person to run a day care," said Ms. Gamblin.

The good thing about Oberlin has always been that the providers support each other, said Ms. Merryman.

For the Week of the Young Child, said Mrs. Berls, she has a farm day, balloon day and decorate-your-own cookie activities planned.

To keep the community alive, said Mrs. Wade, we need these people.

Ms. Merryman said when she was calling people about the luncheon, a lot of them said the issue didn't affect them, but it does really. Without this service, people won't be able to stay in Oberlin.

What about a community day-care center? asked Dr. Cullen. That is something the community would have to start, said Mrs. Koehn, but they are trying to start one in Hays and they are hitting a lot of walls.

Maybe the issue of lack of day care needs to be taken to the Economic Development Corp., said Dr. Cullen. Mrs. Kahn said the women would gladly talk to that committee.

People need to understand the costs and support day care, said Dr. Cullen. It is expensive to educate kids at any level, he said, and this is a community issue that needs to be addressed.

There was a bill in the state Legislature to help with early childhood education costs, but it's dead, said Mrs. Chesterman. People should call their legislators and ask for support, she said.

*County needs more day care

(Continued from Page 1)
wrong, it's to help the providers improve what they offer.

There are lots of regulations for day care, she said, including needing so many square feet per child for play area, working smoke alarms, safety procedures in place and more. People interested in day care, she said, can get the booklet from her office and see what needs

to be done. There is a yearly state license fee of \$15, she added, and then a county fee of \$10.

"We really do need more day cares in the county," said Ms. Gamblin. "If you think you might be interested and don't know for sure, give us a call."

The number for the department is (785) 475-8118.

*City to discuss library

(Continued from Page 1)
Dorshorst, has served for the past four to five years, but doesn't live inside the city.

The district librarian says the city needs to change its rules by doing the charter ordinance, said Mr. Shike, or only have people inside the city on the board.

The proposal would allow a maximum of two people from outside the city to serve on the board at any time. Mr. Shike said, while people

outside the city limits are allowed to use the library, the county does not help support it.

Also during the meeting Thursday, Mayor Joe Stanley plans to sign a declaration making Friday, April 25, Arbor Day.

The meeting is open to the public but will not be aired on local access cable channel 7.

Town plans garage sales

Norcatour plans to hold its annual citywide garage sale the second weekend of May.

For the past two years, Norcatour residents have joined forces to hold the citywide sale on a Saturday in early spring.

This year, the sale will be from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 10. According to the *Norcatour News*, people in the town who want to join can sign up at the post office, bank or city building.

High Plains

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This program is presented in part by the Kansas Arts Commission, a State agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency which believes that a great nation deserves great art, Oberlin Arts & Humanities Commission, Hansen Foundation, The Hansen Foundation



ON SATURDAY, Karen Metcalf helped Patty Henrickson and four others make earrings during a beginning jewelry class at the Golden Age Center. The class was sponsored by the Decatur Tomorrow Committee on Utilizing Existing Facilities and Buildings.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Road crew fixing drainage and soft spots

The Decatur County road and bridge crew is out working on drainage and soft spots, supervisor Tim Stallman told commissioners at a meeting last Tuesday.

Gene Gallentine, who was in the audience, asked Mr. Stallman about a soft spot on the road on the Decatur/Norton County line. Commissioner Doyle Brown asked about the Jennings Road.

Mr. Stallman said the crew is digging down two feet and putting in good dirt, which will hopefully make a difference. The crew is also continuing to pull shoulders in, he said.

Mr. Stallman said he received notice of an award from the state on contracts for two bridges in the county to be done late summer, with the county paying 20 percent and the Kansas Department of Transportation paying 80 percent.

Both bridges are about two miles southwest of Oberlin, with the farthest one to the north costing \$45,100 and the other one \$38,600.

The commissioners approved the contracts with Jand J Contractors Inc. out of Iola.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Ratified Mr. Stallman's decision to take vehicle No. 2, a 2001 Dodge pickup, to North Platte to have the transmission for repairs.

- Asked how much it costs to gravel roads. Mr. Stallman said many factors figure in the price, including the width and status of the road. The average cost could be \$1,800 a mile to \$5,400 a mile for

County Countdown

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Heard that the ambulance crew has been busy, with 18 calls already in month and 101 since the beginning

of the year. Story to come.

- Heard the road and bridge crew is working on drainage and soft spots on county roads. Story at left.

cause of mileage from the gravel pit, which is in Nebraska.

- Talked about the new E911 addressing system. The commissioners agreed to hold a check to R&S Digital, the company that did the maps, until everything is finished.

- Talked about the cities needing to mail out notification for the addresses inside city limits that changed. The commissioners weren't sure if that has been done.

three coats of gravel, he said, adding that it takes three coats to have a good base. The price gets cheaper in the north part of the county be-

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