



Application includes 53 pledges

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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An application for the state tax credit program, with \$234,600 in pledges to help build a new senior center and theater, was sent in for approval Friday.

Last Tuesday, more than 50 people met at the crumbling Golden Age Center to learn about different ways to help get the money for the \$900,000 project, which includes a senior center, theater and bowling alley on the current site.

Connie Grafel, marketing director with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said from the public meeting to the noon application deadline Friday, people pledged \$234,600 for the tax credit program. Others who want to pledge donations should call her, Greg Lohoefer or the Chamber of Commerce, she said. If the credits are approved, she said, organizers will contact those who pledged.

Randy Hrabe, director with the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission out of Hill City, said the Community Service Tax Credit Program can be used for this kind of project. The application process is competitive, he said, and projects were due at noon on Friday.

The maximum any group can apply for with the tax credit program is \$250,000, he said. Basically, if someone donates \$10,000, they can take 70 percent of that, or \$7,000, as a tax credit from the state. That

means the donation will only cost \$3,000, or 30 percent of the amount given, he said.

With \$250,000 in tax credits, said Mr. Hrabe, the center could raise \$357,000.

Last year, he said, there were 52 applications and 13 projects were selected.

The way to rate higher in the process, he said, is to get pledges before the application goes in.

With the program, even if people owe the state income taxes, said Mr. Hrabe, they will receive a check for 70 percent of the donation back.

Another financing aid available, he said, is the Small Community Improvement Program, which started a year ago through the state Department of Commerce. The group may not be able to apply for this program and the tax credit in the same year, however.

The state has \$500,000 in the program, with the maximum amount given at one time \$125,000. The program requires volunteer labor for a project.

The group can also apply for a Community Development Block Grant, with the maximum allowed at \$400,000. For this program, 51 percent of the county has to meet the low-to-moderate income level, he said, and that would have to be proven through a survey.

When would the community know if the tax credit program is approved? asked Ms. Grafel. Around (See TAX on Page 5A)

Families gather at park

AT CENTENNIAL PARK Monday evening, Jo Henderson (left above) and Joyce Hartzog helped serve walking tacos during a Cinco de Mayo celebration and fund raiser for Sappa Park. Chloe Harmon (right) closed her eyes as she hit the pinata sending it swinging from the rope. Decatur Tomorrow purchased two pinatas full of candy for the kids to break using a plastic bat.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



Plans revealed for new center and movie theater

Around 50 people learned about plans to build a new recreation center to include the Golden Age Center, Sunflower Cinema and a six-lane bowling alley.

The meeting last Tuesday night, said Connie Grafel, marketing director of the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Economic Development Corp., was to help kick off the fund raising for the project.

The first application, she said, is due by noon on Friday. She said they are working on getting that done. Both the theater and center are in need of new roofs and both have problems.

Dorothy Moore, manager of the center, said the ceiling has virtually fallen. When it rains, she said, they have to get the garbage cans out to catch the water. The water has gotten behind the paneling and under the floor.

The center, said Ms. Moore, has 20 to 25 people eating at the senior meal site daily during the weekdays. There's also 20 to 25 people on the recreation side depending on the day.

This is a worthwhile project, she said, and extending it to the cinema and bowling alley is a good idea.

Another part of the plan, said Ms. Grafel, is opening a daycare after school from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Kevin Brown, with Sappa Valley Construction, said Ms. Grafel, has worked on the plans for the new structure. So has Rex Olson, a Decatur Community High School graduate, who is an architect in Colorado.

The new structure would include the lots to the south of the original center, said Mr. Brown. There would be dividing walls with sound barriers, but the three would share the same roof. The actual Golden Age Center, said Mr. Brown, has bigger areas than the one now, including a bigger kitchen.

The back of the center will have 10 foot ceilings, he said, which will be used for gymnastic meets. The tables and chairs will be stored in a separate room.

The way the theater and bowling alley are setup one person could run (See PLANS on Page 5A)

Students to show off finery

Juniors and seniors dressed in their finery will march down Main Street on Saturday evening in the annual Decatur Community High School promenade.

The promenade, or parade of the students going to prom, dressed in their tuxedos and formals, is a tradition that's been going on for at least 75 years.

Teacher Carol Brown, one the class sponsors, said the promenade starts at 7 p.m. with the students getting together by 6:45 p.m. in front of the Sunflower Cinema. The couples will walk south down the middle of Penn Avenue to Hall, then turn back and march to the theater. Parents, relatives and townspeople will line both sides of the street to see the kids and their outfits.

After the walk down Main, the students will head to the prom

Fund raiser set before prom

The Sunflower Cinema board plans to hold a fund raiser before the Decatur Community High promenade downtown on Saturday.

The Oberlin Jaycees will cook pork burgers for the board, selling them for a donation from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

The burgers will be grilled in

the drive-through south of the chamber office. After the promenade, there'll be a late movie.

The cinema board invites everyone to come grab a burger, watch the promenade and then watch the film "Nim's Island" at the cinema. Tickets cost \$3, with the show starting after the promenade or around 7:30 p.m.

dinner and dance at The Gateway, which goes until midnight.

Mrs. Brown said The Gateway staff will serve roast beef, potatoes and gravy, Brookville corn, salad, dinner rolls and a cherry dessert.

The theme for the dance is "Diamonds and casinos," she said.

Anyone who wants to see the

prom decorations should stop by The Gateway from 6 to 7 p.m., said Mrs. Brown.

All of the seniors are eligible to be chosen king and queen of the prom, she said. The winners will be named towards the end of the dance. The Oberlin Rotary Club also plans to sponsor an all-night party.

Family relocates after tornado

By **MARYLOU OLSON**
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Sunday, May 4, 2007, is a date that will live forever in the hearts and minds of the Carl Knight family, who lived in Greensburg after the tornado leveled their town a year ago.

Carl and Kathy Knight, their daughter, Kristina and son Robert, along with Mrs. Knight's mother, Marcella Minden, have lived in Oberlin more than a month now. There among dozens of families who have resettled since the storm rather than trying to rebuild.



Carl Knight



Kathy Knight



K. Knight

They said they talked to Ruby Strong, a member of the Oberlin church, and she invited them to come look around. They said they found the people very friendly, so decided to make the move. Mrs. Strong and her son, Glenn, helped them find a

home at 609 N. Wilson. Memories of the night the tornado struck are very vivid to all of them. After the storm, said Mr. Knight, they found most of their pets, including a horse, four dogs, four cats, along with several that were homeless, but their rabbits were (See FAMILY on Page 5A)

*Family moves to Oberlin after tornado

(Continued from Page 1A) didn't make it.

With their house leveled, they lost virtually everything. The family stayed in a motel in Dodge City, getting a few pieces of furniture and clothing from area churches.

Mr. Knight had worked for the senior center in Greensburg and drove the senior bus. His daughter helped serve meals and clean at the center, while his wife worked in the produce department at Dillons grocery. She was able to transfer to the Dillons in Dodge City.

Mrs. Knight said the store in Greensburg employed 22 people, so that meant jobs were lost for 22 families overnight.

Mr. Knight said he was standing on the back porch that evening and realized something was not right. The tornado struck at 8:45 p.m. and they all reached a shelter in the basement of the senior center about five minutes before that. There were 13 people in the shelter, he said, when the walls started vibrating and moving.

"I came up out of the shelter around 11 p.m. and waded in water waist high," he recalled. "It took me 3 1/2 hours to reach our home; there were power lines down everywhere.

"Our belongings were scattered all over and our personal belongings were gone. The Dillons store, which was partially standing, was used as a central location for residents. Buses from Pratt came there to pick up people and take them to surrounding towns.

"I found an elderly woman who was pinned under a hot-water heater, and with help from several others, we were able to free her and she survived. I had an old truck which was still drivable, though damaged, and I hauled items for neighbors and others who needed help. It was so hard seeing the personal property of so many destroyed so quickly."

Mr. Knight said he has diabetes and heart problems, so he is unable to work. His wife is working at the

Church ad pays off

An ad placed by the Oberlin Seventh Day Adventist Church in a magazine sent to people in the midwest paid off, when a family of four decided to make their home here.

Carl and Kathy Knight, along with their son and daughter decided to move to Oberlin after a tornado in Greensburg a year ago destroyed their home. The couple saw the ad in *The Outlet*, placed by the members of the church here, then decided to move.

Pastor Mike Larson said the church members decided to place the ad because their church is small and they aren't able to do the work they want to do. The ad asked for members to move to Oberlin as an outreach program.

Dollar General store in Oberlin. Their daughter is expecting a baby in July, but has been ordered by the doctor not to work until after her baby is born.

"Oberlin is very outgoing, with friendly people who have made us feel real welcome," they said. "We feel like we are all family.

"The tornado was very devastating and made a big impact on our lives, but we are very glad to be in Oberlin. The town is similar to Greensburg, which had a population of 1,500, but we feel Oberlin has even more."

He said that about 40 homes have been rebuilt in Greensburg, along with a Dillons convenience store, school gym and cafeteria. On the anniversary of the storm Sunday, President George W. Bush delivered the commencement address to the high school seniors.



Kids measure milk jugs

OUTSIDE THE GRADE SCHOOL Thursday morning, Kolton Paul, Robin Wonder and Grant Gilliam (right above) worked through the milk jugs the students and staff collected to be recycled. Chris Anderson (left) and Nick Ashley looked at the tape measure. The 757 jugs weight 100 pounds and were picked up by Sarah Fredrickson and put into three gaylord boxes. The jugs will be picked up by someone from the Northwest Kansas Recycling Center.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes

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*Tax credit application sent

(Continued from Page 1A) July 1, said Mr. Hrabe. All of the tax credits would need to be sold by December 2009 and the project completed two years after that.

Dave Barber, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development administration, said there are some options with loans through his agency.

The Community Facilities Program provides direct loans from the federal government. There is also a loan program using a local bank which has a higher interest rate.

Mr. Barber said for any of this to happen, organizers need to decide what entity or group would own the center. Is it a nonprofit group or the city or county? he asked.

He said he hasn't had a lot of time to work on the project and just started to look at some options which might work.

"What I heard you say is either the city or county has to be the holder of loan," said Rhonda May, councilwoman.

Or a nonprofit, said Mr. Barber, but that needs to be figured out.

With the tax credit program, who needs to own the center? asked Commissioner Ralph Unger. It needs to be a nonprofit group, said Mr. Hrabe, but the project can be supported by the city or county.

So Decatur Tomorrow could be the owner? asked Ms. May. But what if the loan defaults; who makes payments?

Secured bonds are used, said Mr. Barber. So in simple terms, said Ms. May, either the city or county has to do the loan.

If Decatur Tomorrow owned the building, she said, then a mortgage could be done. Mr. Barber said he's not familiar with that group, and

would need to do a more extensive study. It could be done with a nonprofit group, he said, but they would need to show five years of a successful operation and show that the loan can be repaid.

At this time, he said, he can't really say what would and wouldn't work here. It will probably be a 25 to 30 year loan, said Mr. Barber.

Will the building need to meet government requirements? asked Carolyn Burtis, business owner. Yes, said Mr. Barber. Those have already been addressed in the plans, said Kevin Brown, with Sappa Valley Construction.

Rural Development is available, said Mr. Barber. There are lots of options and good programs, but it could turn out that there isn't a good fit for this project.

*Plans discussed for new center

(Continued from Page 1A) both sides, he said.

Is it an all metal building? asked Carolyn Burtis. It will be a mixture of stucco, brick and metal, said Mr. Brown. It will be more efficient and easier to heat and cool. The plan is to use as much as they can out of the existing building, he said.

"We appreciate all that you've done for the community," said Ms. Grafel.

All communities need a place for the kids to go, said Mr. Brown.

The bowling alley, said Ms.

Grafel, is in the last phase of the project. Southwest Implement, she said, has said the land will be donated. Sappa Valley Construction has also donated a lot of the work.

The total cost of the building is projected at \$900,000, which includes:

- \$25,000 for purchase of equipment, tools and fixtures for the center.
- \$7,000 for land purchase.
- \$85,000 to purchase equipment for the theater.
- \$10,000 for a theater sound

system.

- \$406,500 for the building.
- \$135,000 for the bowling alley.
- \$75,000 for concrete.
- \$75,000 for plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning and floors.
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- \$50,000 for demolition and site work.
- \$4,500 for a contingency fund.

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