

# \* 180 House closes

(Continued from Page 1A)  
The company didn't really have a problem hiring direct-care staff, he said. Actually the home didn't need that many people at any given time. The struggle was finding a good administrator and clinician that would be a fit to the home. Before selling or auctioning off the house, he said he would like to talk to people with Youthville or the St. Francis Academy about buying

it and using the home for kids. Staff members are still clearing items out of the home, said Mr. Bechler. Besides the loss of 10 jobs in Decatur County, it also means two kids fewer in the Oberlin School District. Although the 180 House in Oberlin is closed, he said, homes in other areas are going to stay open. It's also important to know that the

home wasn't shut down by the state, but by the company. "We sincerely appreciate Oberlin's support of the project," he said. "We regret making the decision, but as many times as we have considered this since Kathy's death, there was always someone or something that came along that gave us a new hope for the house to be successful. None of the scenarios worked out."

# \* Money up, down for city

(Continued from Page 1A)  
is going. One thing the city can't continue forever, he said, is using the revenue from the electrical department to help pay for other areas. Some day, equipment in the electric department will need to be replaced and the revenue will have to go towards that.

and in 2007 it was \$99,587. There's been an erratic nature to revenues and expenditures, said Mr. Gilley, which is either because of a lack of budget control or accounting. In 2008, he said, most of the city funds, or budget accounts, came in under budget, but the council voted to increase property taxes for 2009. There's no explanation for the erratic expenses over the last five years and the city has lots of challenges coming up with the budget. Mr. Gilley said the city will have to focus its resources and come

up with some budget ideas. The council will have to get a handle on erratic spending, he said, adding that he doesn't have any answers right now. The council responded well to the report, said Mr. Gilley. The council agreed it will need to find out where the city is at before the next budget cycle this summer. "Basically," he said, "expenditures for the city are up and the revenue is going down. In the next three to five years, the city may continue seeing decreases in revenue."

# \* Prison gets reprieve

(Continued from Page 1A)  
"Where are we going to put all those inmates if Norton was to close?" he asked. The Norton prison houses in the neighborhood of 730 convicts. The state Senate initially passed the budget-cutting bill on Wednesday, with the final vote sometime Thursday. The effect on Norton and the surrounding area could be devastating should the prison close. At least

267 state employees could lose their jobs. Secretary Werholtz, in his letter, told employees that the Senate proposal provided for a 3.4 percent across-the-board cut for all state agencies. He said for the Department of Corrections, this would be in addition to reductions previously submitted by the department. He said a 3.4 percent cut would add up to about \$9.3 million. The House cuts, at 1 percent, amounted to only \$2.7 million, however. "Since we are now completing the seventh month of the fiscal year," Mr. Werholtz said, "it would be very difficult to realize reductions of \$9.3 million in the remain-

ing five months.... To accomplish this, reductions would have to be made in major budget areas. "The possible areas of budget reductions include suspension of operations at Winfield and Norton Correctional Facilities, effective April 1, advance the suspension of operations at Stockton Correctional Facility (from June earlier reported) to April 1, abolish parole and post release supervision ... and terminate all offender treatment and intervention programs...." He said decisions would have to be made about what do do with the inmates from the three facilities, since they would exceed the capacity of the remaining state prisons.

# \* Voting set for April 7

(Continued from Page 1A)  
agent, had thrown her name into the hat when the board needed to appoint a new member in March 2007 after the resignation of Delayne May. • Doug Brown, manager of Frenchman Valley Co-op in McCook, who asked to be appointed and lost the job in a coin toss. • Dan Wasson, who served on the board for 12 years and lost his seat to member Monte Moore in 2005. For the Oberlin council, with three open seats, William Riedel, who retired from Coors Brewing Co. in Golden, Colo., after 33 years of service, as well as all three of the incumbents, Rob McFee, who was elected in 2005; Jay Anderson, elected in 2001; and Marcia Lohofener, who was appointed in April 2007 to finish the term of Mayor Joe Stanley. Mr. Riedel moved here three years ago, but he and his wife bought their home here 14 years ago. In Jennings, incumbent council member Louise Cressler filed. No one filed for the mayor's spot held by Bob Jones or for the council spot held by Don Bolt. In Norcat, Von Johnson filed for the mayor's spot, held now by Mike Helm. Jerry Wescott filed for a council seat. Seats that are up in Norcat include those held by Carl Lyon and Linda Hunt. No one filed for the Dresden City Council, although spots held by Keith Muirhead, Jackie Douglas and Don Ritter are up. It's rare for anyone to file for office in Dresden.

The last day for people to register to vote in the upcoming election is Monday, March 23.

# Banquet spaces available

It's time to make reservations for the annual Farmer/Rancher Appreciation banquet, sponsored by the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 13, at the Gateway. Anyone wanting to attend the dinner should make a reservation by Monday by calling the Chamber office at 475-3441 or stopping by the Business Enhancement Entrepreneurial Center.



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