

# Mom opens studio in former church

A Decatur County photographer started her business working out of the living room of her country home, but recently bought a former church and turned it into a studio.

Amanda Sowers said she got started in photography by taking senior photos for relatives. For the past two years, she's worked out of her living room. The opportunity came up to buy the former Seventh Day Adventist church on South East Avenue. Not only does she have the plus of having a studio in town, she said with a laugh, but she has some of her living room back.

Mrs. Sowers said she learned a lot of her photography skills through reading online material, then started going to workshops. She said she went to Parker, Colo., this fall and took a workshop, driving out and back in one day.

She said she's always looking for education opportunities.

She does both studio and outdoor work, as well as senior pictures, newborns, family, children, engagement and weddings. Probably her favorites are the newborns and seniors.

Currently, she offers a newborn package that includes four sessions in the first year at a reduced price. One of her packages comes with a book of the pictures.

While she stays busy, so far she hasn't needed a second photographer, but added that she will see where the business goes. She has a graphic design intern from McCook working for her and her sister, Lacy Zodrow helps with package orders, getting things ready to ship.

She takes lots of pictures during each session and then narrows them down to the best ones for proofs. She retains ownership of the pictures, but people can order what they want. She does have a photo package for weddings that



**IN HER STUDIO,** Oberlin photographer Amanda Sowers talked with her son Kaden before she took a few pictures. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

includes pictures on a photo disk. With the seniors, she tries to tailor the session around them and what they like. With little kids, she said she goes with the flow.

Her slogan is, "Your life, your Art," because she wants people to put things on their walls that are their memories, their art.

"I want to create images for them," she said, "that they will cherish forever." Mrs. Sowers and her husband Yancy have two kids, Kyra and Kaden.

She loves being in a small community where she knows the people. At some point, she plans to have a grand opening at the studio.

She is working with the junior class on a raffle in which she would give a free session to someone each year of life. The person would then just have to buy the pictures they want.

To contact her, she's on Facebook or the web at [www.amandasowersphotography.com](http://www.amandasowersphotography.com), or call 475-3171.

# Angel tree program readies gifts for kids

The Oberlin Jaycees' annual Angel Tree program has just 18 kids so far who could use some Christmas cheer, but organizers hope to see a lot more. Forms, available at the schools, grocery store and from organizer Abby Hissong, can be turned in until the last day of the month.

Each form is filled out by a parent or person who knows the child, then put on a red form, leaving the name off, and hung on the tree in Rocking R downtown. The forms include the child's age, sex, clothing size, any extra items needed and special requests.

The forms also tell whether a child is a sibling of another one on the tree.

Mrs. Hissong said as of Thursday, she had received 18 forms. Last year, 70 kids on the tree got presents.

The idea, said Mrs. Hissong, is to help make Christmas a little brighter for kids in Decatur County. She suggested people who pick up a card fill the clothing needs first and then do the special requests if possible.

All forms have to be filled out and turned in to Mrs. Hissong by

Tuesday. Wrapped presents have to be turned in at Rocking R by Wednesday, Dec. 15. Parents will pick up the gifts between 4:30 and 7 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 20.

Mrs. Hissong said one group gave money to pay for whatever is needed for the kids and two others have asked about making a donation.

That money might go for movie passes for each of the kids 6 and older, she said. While in the past, each child received a \$5 movie pass, this year she wants to do a \$10 pass. That would allow the kids to go to any movie, even a 3-D film, which costs a buck more, and also get treats, or go to two \$5 movies.

Groups can buy the passes themselves and donate them, she added.

Another club in town normally brings in toys and wrapping paper in December, instead of doing a gift exchange among members.

The coordinators from this year's scavenger hunt donated to buy fruit from the Decatur Community High FFA Chapter, and each child will also receive a bag of fruit.

For questions, call Mrs. Hissong 475-2696.

# Woman awarded money for bowling

The bowling alley project will receive another \$2,500, thanks to people voting for an essay written by an Oberlin woman.

Shayla Williby, a co-owner of the firm Dream Makers, wrote an essay for the Modern Woodmen of America's 2010 Gatherings Giveaway this fall. The best of the essays were posted online from the beginning of November to last Monday, and people could vote every day.

Last Tuesday, Mrs. Williby got an e-mail that her entry had received the highest vote and would receive the \$2,500 for the bowling alley project.

The project was up against four others were from Lexington, Ky.; Winter Garden, Fla.; Bass Harbor, Maine; and Republic, Mo.

Here is Mrs. Williby's essay:

When the bowling alley in Oberlin, Kan., burned down, residents saw a need and an opportunity — to tear down the community's dilapidated senior center and theater as well and rebuild all three in one facility. All three gathering places were vitally important to the 1,700-resident community.

Greg Lohofener, a businessman and lifetime Oberlin resident, formed a group of local residents who were dedicated to erecting a new \$1.2 million facility to house all three entities. Community members jumped into action.

On Jan. 31, 2009, 60 volunteers gathered to start the demolition of the old senior center and theater. The volunteers tore down walls, carried out the old theater seats and did anything needed to get the project started.

"It was awe-inspiring to see all ages working side by side toward a common goal and learning about each other as they did so," said Shayla Williby, an Oberlin resident who volunteered on that day.

Many more have gathered and volunteered since that day to make the dream a reality. While the senior center and theater are completed and back in use, the community is in the process of raising an additional \$100,000 to complete the bowling alley. Soon, all three facilities will be complete for people to gather, share old memories and make new ones.

# Tickets out for Christmas giveaway

With Christmas only 32 days away, it's time to start collecting tickets for a chance to win the \$1,000 Grand Prize in the Oberlin merchants' annual "Christmas on Us" giveaway.

The Oberlin Herald has teamed up with Oberlin businesses to offer the contest, which promotes shopping here in Decatur County, again this year.

This year's sponsors include the Carpet Center, Home Planning Center, Decatur Co-op and Ampride, Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Ultimate Fertil-

izer, Stanley Hardware, Ward Drug Store, Lifetime Eye Care, Creative Collision, Raye's Grocery, The Bank and R&M Service Center.

For every \$10 shoppers spend at sponsoring businesses between today and Friday, Dec. 17, they will receive one ticket. People can also get one ticket a week from the newspaper office or from the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce. No purchase is required to win any prize.

Tickets are limited to 250 for any single purchase.

The Grand Prize drawing is scheduled for 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 19, at the gazebo in Centennial Park, unless the weather is bad. Then it will be moved inside.

Up until the Grand Prize drawing, numbers will be drawn each week and placed in the sponsors' ads in *The Herald*. Those numbers match tickets already issued by merchants. Bring that ticket into the newspaper office before 5 p.m. Friday of that week and claim a \$50 instant prize.

All of the prizes are paid in scrip

that can be used at sponsoring businesses only. Merchants are not required to give change.

Employees of any of the sponsoring businesses are not eligible to get tickets at the place of their employment. Employees of the newspaper and their immediate family aren't eligible to win any prize.

Winners must be present and have the ticket with them at the time of the drawing. All winners agree to be photographed and interviewed by the newspaper.

# Council OKs police chief hiring local man to fill vacant spot on force

The Oberlin City Council told the police chief Thursday to go ahead and hire an Oberlin man to fill a vacancy on the city police force.

After a 15-minute closed session for unelected personnel, Police Chief Wade Lockhart asked the council to allow him to hire Bret Marietta. He proposed starting him at \$12.50 an hour, with a 50-cent raise after he completes training.

As in past years, the council approved giving \$250 in Santa Bucks to each full-time city employee and \$100 to each part-time

staffer, including the volunteer firefighters and council members.

Interim City Administrator Karen Larson said the Santa Bucks do go through the payroll computer, so taxes are taken out.

Mrs. Larson said she keeps getting calls from a company that has antennas on top of the city's water tower. In the past, the contract has just been signed, she said, but the city doesn't receive anything for allowing those antennas to be on the tower.

The police department and the school have antennas on the tower, she said, and

that is fine, but the city doesn't even know which other ones are up there.

At the very least, the city should at least know who's using the tower, said Councilman Rob McFee.

"Let's find out," said Mayor Joe Stanley, "and what they are willing to pay to keep them up there."

In other business, the council:

- Heard the cemetery wall is pretty much finished. Mrs. Larson said the city had made the final payment, but kept out 10 percent to cover any problems. There were several caps

on top of the wall that weren't square, she said, so the contractor sent the crew back.

- Reported several complaints about the brick planter around the Oberlin sign at the top of Penn Avenue. City Foreman Dan Castle said he is working on a plan to repair it.

- Heard that Mrs. Larson is continuing to work on a schedule for the runway with the engineering firm.

- Heard from Rick Pauls, with Pheasants Forever, who said the city employees did a great job on the group's annual banquet. He

introduced the new wildlife biologist, Ryan Diener, who is living in one of the former dorms at the youth ranch.

- Heard from Jan Ackerman, code enforcement officer, who said she would like to take a step back on two properties, 203 E. Hall and 609 N. Neill to allow time to talk to the owners to see what else can be done. Maybe this will keep the city from incurring a demolition bill and keep the property on the tax rolls, she said.

The council gave its OK.

# Council might allow beer at alley

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The Oberlin City Council will look at changes to the ordinance on cereal malt beverages that could allow the sale of beer at the new bowling alley on Main Street at its next meeting.

The council talked about the ordinance at a meeting Thursday. As it's written, it doesn't allow the sale of beer within 500 feet of a church, school or library, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch. It does allow for someone to petition for a waiver to that rule. That would require publication and a hearing. Mr. Hirsch said there aren't any standards for waivers.

Bowling alley promoters in the

audience said they would like to sell beer at the bowling alley. Mayor Joe Stanley said the ordinance either needs to be changed or they will have to go through the waiver process.

Greg Lohofener, with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said he thinks the city library is 280 feet from the bowling alley.

Is this something that could fall under the Board of Zoning and Appeals? asked Judy Scott, from the audience.

No, said Mr. Hirsch, not the way this ordinance is set up.

Councilman Rob McFee suggested changing the ordinance. If it's changed to 200 feet, it would allow

the bowling alley to get a license to sell beer, but it still wouldn't allow for something across from the grade school to sell beer.

The group talked about measuring again from the bowling alley to the library to make sure 200 feet is enough.

"Whether you are a beer drinker or not," said Mayor Stanley, "that is something in the alley that could be the difference in making it or not."

He added that he knows at the golf course, being able to sell beer has made the difference when it comes to money.

Mr. Hirsch said he would work on the ordinance, taking out the stuff about the waiver, since it's meaningless.

# Firefighters train for rescues here

Members of the Oberlin and Decatur County Fire Departments took part in confined-space rescue training over the weekend.

Chief Bill Cathcart said 11 firefighters took part in the class, taught by Rick Dieber, program administra-

tor with the University of Kansas Fire and Rescue Training Institute.

The firefighters took the training at the station in Oberlin and did practical exercises at the Hansen Mueller elevator.



*Come One, Come All!*

# Soup Supper

4:30-7:30 p.m. Friday  
(Before and after the Parade of Lights)

at the Golden Age Center - Downtown Oberlin  
Proceeds to benefit the new spa room at Cedar Living Center

Donations may also be left at the front desk of the hospital or mailed to: Decatur Health Systems

810 W. Columbia, Box 268  
Oberlin, KS 67749

# Most businesses close for Thanksgiving

Most Oberlin businesses will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, so if you want to eat a meal away from home, you might want to join others for the community Thanksgiving Day dinner at noon at St. John's Lutheran Church. Salads and desserts are still needed.

Crossroads Express, Ampride and Dollar General will be open. Pizza Hut, Frontier Restaurant, the LandMark Inn, the ReLod and Coffee, Tea and Me plan to be

closed, along with most stores and offices.

Raye's Grocery will be closed Thursday, as will *The Oberlin Herald*. Most, but not all, businesses will reopen on Friday.

Oberlin schools will be closed today, Thursday and Friday and will resume classes Monday. All state, federal, county and city offices will be closed Thursday. City and county offices will also be closed on Friday.

The post office will be closed Thursday, along with all banks, and there will be no mail service. Banks and post offices will reopen on Friday.

