

Biologist moves into city house at Sappa Park

By MARY LOU OLSON
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Ryan Diener of Columbia, Mo., has moved to Oberlin as the new "Farm Bill" biologist for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.



Ryan Diener

Mr. Diener is living in the house at the former youth ranch at Sappa Park. He is a native of Marthasville, Mo., and a graduate of the Washington, Mo., High School.

"My job will be to help anyone in Cheyenne, Decatur, Rawlins, Thomas, Sheridan, Norton and Graham counties who is interested in any wildlife habitats," he said, adding that he will also consult with area landowners on conservation and land use.

Rick Pauls, with the Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever, who helped get a biologist here, said he hopes that having biologist will not only help improve wildlife habitat in the area, but also help landowners willing to get that job done get some money to pay for it.

He added that he hopes that the program will also produce an increase in walk-in hunting leases.

The biologist position was created using money from the Grassroots Conservation Campaign, a joint effort of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in Kansas. The campaign is a partnership among the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 40 Kansas Pheasants Forever chapters, 11 Kansas Quail Forever chapters and sponsoring corporations, foundations and individuals to improve a million acres of Kansas habitat for pheasants, quail and other wildlife.

The program is designed to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers, through one-on-one consulting, about the benefits of conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve, as well as assisting farmers and landowners.

Pheasants Forever began employing Farm Bill biologists in 2003, the organization says, and now has more than 60 working in 12 states: Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The biologists have contacted and consulted with more than 35,000 landowners, resulting in the improvement of more than 1.34 million acres of land for wildlife.

Mr. Diener is Kansas' fourth Farm Bill Wildlife biologist. "It's great to finally have this position in place for the folks in northwest Kansas," said Steve Riley, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill biologist manager. "We have been looking for just the right person for this position for some time now, and are pleased that Ryan has joined our team."

Mr. Diener said he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from the University of Missouri in May. Before joining Pheasants Forever, he worked in several wildlife jobs in Missouri and North Dakota.

He will work out of the Decatur County Service Center of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Oberlin. He can be reached at (785) 475-3131 or by e-mail at rdiener@pheasantsforever.org.

Kansas Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever chapters have more than 6,000 members.

We wish you a Merry Christmas



AT THE DECATUR PROFESSIONAL Women's lunch last Wednesday, (from left) Matt Glading, Jacob Larue, Tyler Bruggeman and Nolan Henningson sang with the DCHS Singers at the Business Enhancement Entrepreneurial Center.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Ladies Shopping Night planned for Thursday

Stores in Oberlin will be open late Thursday for the second annual Ladies Shopping Night sponsored by the Oberlin Business Alliance, with shopping hours of 9 to 11 p.m.

Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, said the alliance sponsored the event last year, which was the first time for the late shopping hours in recent years. Stores were open from 10 p.m. to midnight, he said, and they had a lot of comments that it was maybe too late.

This year the group decided to move it up.

Last year, said Mr. Vollertsen, the turnout exceeded the group's expectations. There were people in and out of the stores and several who bought items.

Many of the businesses will have snacks and drinks to offer, he said. Some might have in-store specials as well. All businesses are invited to be open for the shopping evening.

With the success of the women's night, the alliance will sponsor its first Men's Shopping Night from 9 to 11 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 23.

Bring wrapped gifts to store for Angel Tree

Presents for the 81 kids on the Oberlin Jaycees Angel Tree are due today.

All of the gifts need to be wrapped and turned back into Rocking R in downtown Oberlin, where the tree is set up. Parents or guardians should pick up the gifts between 4:30 and 7 p.m. Monday.

Eighty-one kids, said Abby Hissong, who organizes the tree for the Jaycees, is the most she can remember. She has been organizing the tree for at least 10 years.

Even with the increase from the previous year, when there were around 60, she said, each of the kids' forms was taken off the tree and shopped for in time for Christmas.

In addition to gifts bought and wrapped by individuals, clubs and other organizations, each family will receive a bag of fruit bought and bagged through the FFA chapter at Decatur Community High School.

Mrs. Hissong said each of the kids 6 and older also will receive a \$5 movie pass to Sunflower Cinema.

City looks at how to pay for new water plant

The Oberlin City Council plans to meet Thursday night to discuss options for financing the planned water treatment plant.

The two-phased project will cost close to \$6 million when it's done.

Interim City Administrator Karen Larson said John Haas with Ranson Financial will be here to talk about

using general obligation and or revenue bonds to borrow money for the project.

Mrs. Larson said the city is also looking at the possibility of grant money.

The meeting will start at 7 p.m. upstairs in The Gateway. It is open to the public.

Food drive up to 689 items

Stanley Hardware's annual food drive could be to the halfway mark next week at the rate food is coming in.

In its first week, the drive brought in 321 items, said owner Joe Stanley. Since then, it's grown by 368 items to 689.

The goal for the drive is 2,000 items by 2011, which is just 2 1/2 weeks away.

At the end of the drive, the food will be taken to the Decatur County Food Pantry in the basement of the United Church on Griffith to help the agency start the new year.

Rexford toddler killed in truck crash

Support has begun pouring in for the family of a 2-year-old Rexford boy killed in a fiery truck crash Thursday in the northeast Kansas town of Wathena.

Collection sites have been set up for people wanting to donate to the family of Kyler Petersen, including the Frontier Ag elevator office and Golden Plains High School in Rexford and the office of PSI Transport, 742 West U.S. 24 in Hoxie.

Frontier Ag has a donation can at the office. At Golden Plains, donations can be left with the school secretary. Betha Thummel of PSI Transport said many people have already donated money or Christmas gifts for the family's other children. Thummel said she can pick up gifts or they can be left at the office.

Kyler Petersen died Thursday in Wathena when a semi-trailer rig driven by his father, Michael Petersen, 38, left the road and hit a tree. The accident took place shortly after 3 a.m. on U.S. 36 across from the Riverside School in Wathena.

Paul Stewart, of the weekly *Kansas Chief* of Wathena, reported that Master Trooper Doug Duncan of the Kansas Highway Patrol said the rig left the highway, drove off the south shoulder, traveled across a concrete drainage ditch and struck a tree nearly head on. The tree may have stopped the semi from crashing

into a nearby house.

The trooper said following the impact, the cab of the vehicle burst into flames. Petersen told rescuers he managed to get out of the semi, but heavy smoke and flames from the ignited diesel fuel prevented him from finding his son, who then was trapped in the cab.

The trailer remained intact, but little was left of the burned-out cab.

Mr. Duncan said Wathena firefighters rushed to the scene, as well as a Doniphan County ambulance from Troy and a LifeNet emergency medical helicopter from St. Joseph (Mo.) Rosecrans Memorial Airport, just a few miles to the east.

The air ambulance took Mr. Petersen to Heartland Regional Medical Center in St. Joseph. The trooper reported he had "disabling" injuries, including severe burns. His son's body was taken to the Harman-Rohde Funeral Home in Wathena.

The patrol's Critical Highway Accident Response Team unit was called to the scene. These officers perform forensic mapping at fatality accident scenes, Trooper Duncan said.

A hazmat team was called to handle the large amount of diesel fuel spilled onto the ground in the open field.

Wathena Chief of Police Brian

Walker said he was notified at home by a citizen of the crash and fire, initially thought to involve a semi-trailer rig and a car.

When he arrived at the site, just south of U.S. 36 and the school, Walker said, the firemen were laying out hose to combat the flames.

"At that time, you could still see the frame of the cab, but the fire was growing rapidly," he said. "One victim, the driver - Michael Petersen - was on the ground about 10 yards away from the crash site. He was being tended to by EMT Bob Ryser.

"It was apparent that he appeared to be alert, but had sustained some type of head injury. He kept repeating, 'My son is still in there.' Two truckers who had happened onto the wreck said he had told them the 2-year-old was in the sleeper."

One of the truckers said that he had been following Petersen's rig east through most of Doniphan County, but did not witness the crash itself.

Walker said as additional assistance was arriving - Doniphan County Sheriff Jerry Dubach and Trooper Duncan - he began to search the immediate area in case the child had been ejected from the vehicle.

The ambulance arrived from Troy, but medical personnel decided

to have Petersen transported by helicopter. Wathena Fire Chief Tony Libel and Police Officer Raymond Hall then established a landing site on the highway. Petersen was flown to the St. Joseph hospital, where he was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit, Chief Walker said.

The police chief said once firefighters managed to extinguish the flames, only debris remained of the cab. Authorities then began sifting through the rubble and ashes for the boy's body.

"The front grill and brush guard of the cab apparently were knocked off (in the crash)," Walker said, "yet the vehicle plowed approximately 50 feet on the ground before it hit the tree.

"When the passenger side of the cab struck the tree, the impact broke the engine loose from its mounting and it came to rest about 10 feet from the wreckage. The vehicle's front axle also was ripped off and wrapped around the tree."

Troopers at the scene said the boy died on impact. Mr. Peterson had been wearing a seat belt but his son wasn't, the patrol reported. The father had been pulling an empty cattle trailer to St. Joseph, friends said.

Schmitt Funeral Home in Quinter, (785) 754-3321, is handling the arrangements.

Bowling alley gets closer to reality

Supporters of the new bowling alley on Main Street continue to get closer to the fund-raising goal of \$175,000 to \$180,000.

As of Monday, said Greg Lohoefer with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., \$145,600 has been raised for that part of the recreation center project. The new figure, he noted, includes installing new lanes

instead of refurbishing the old ones from the former bowling alley south of town.

That leaves around \$30,000 to \$35,000 still to be raised, he said.

The figure, he noted, doesn't include the money raised at an Oberlin Royal Neighbors potato bar fund raiser on Thursday.

At this time, said Mr. Lohoefer, he doesn't

know of any fund raisers or grants upcoming for the project.

With the project nearing its end, Mr. Lohoefer said, they are starting to accept applications for a bowling alley manager. Anyone who's interested should call Connie Grafel, marketing director for the corporation, at 475-2901.

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