



AT DOLLAR GENERAL, Jonathan Fick (above) loaded donated Gatorade and water into the back of a pickup to send to the firefighters, ambulance crews and other volunteers

Tuesday evening. Raye's Grocery owner Kirk Brown (below) held bags of sandwiches made by volunteers for the firefighters. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

# Dry conditions forecasted to continue here

By CAROLYN PLOTTS  
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Northwest Kansas is in a drought. That's the good news.

The bad news is, it's likely to get worse before it gets any better. The National Weather Service website shows a map depicting drought covering this area. The legend predicts the drought will persist or intensify over the next three months.

"It's been a couple of weeks since 0.19 inches of rain fell in Decatur County (on June 15)," said Melvin Martin, *The Oberlin Herald's* weather reporter, and the official weather observer for Oberlin.

He said 0.10 of an inch fell around the first of June and only small amounts in May. He said the county is way behind last year. In 2011, 10.11 inches had fallen by this time as compared to the 5.89 inches so far this year. In 2010, rainfall by the end of June was 13.90 inches, and in 2009, it was 12.07 inches.

Scott Mentzer, meteorologist in charge at the Weather Service office in Goodland, said Decatur County is 5.99 inches below normal rainfall. Mr. Mentzer said he

has had several calls about the heat wave and drought. He said the high temperatures are the highest since the record-setting Dust Bowl year of 1936 and close to highs recorded in the 1940s.

The weather service showed a high of 115 degrees in Hill City on Tuesday, which broke the old record of 107 in 1940.

Mr. Mentzer said droughts can be classified as agricultural, hydrological, meteorological or socio-economic. He said each classification uses different criteria to determine when a drought exists. Generally, though, lack of rainfall, lack of soil moisture, lack of river stream flow and the amount of evaporation all contribute to drought. How these deficits occur across a specific time scale define the severity.

Lack of moisture, coupled with extreme heat, has turned northwest Kansas into a tinder box, prompting cities and counties to invoke burn bans and outlaw fireworks of any kind.

To follow weather conditions recorded by the service, go the office's web page at [www.weather.gov/gld](http://www.weather.gov/gld).

# Reporter learns about rural towns

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP  
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It was one of those moments I'll always wish I'd taken a photo of.

I'd already been all over the area of the fire Tuesday, tramping around for easily four hours. I'd gone straight into the center of it when it first started to snapphotos, and came back to it to work the periphery and find out how it was being contained. Driving from pocket to pocket of trucks and people, everyone had something to tell me. And I recognized a face at every stop.

But when I pulled up on the eastern side, handing out water bottles and asking for information, the last person I expected to see was Gary Anderson, owner of the LandMark Inn.

Now that I think about it, my wish is twofold: I wish I'd snapped that photo of him — dirty, covered in soot and sweat, moving fast and passing water — but I also wish I could get a photo of my own face in that moment. It was truly dumbfounded, if only for a second.

You see, Gary was the first person I met in Oberlin. He quietly showed me my room at the LandMark that first night I stayed here. That night I had the jitters, consumed entirely with my up-coming interview the next day at *The Herald*. He was also the first person I met twice, when I came back to look for an apartment.

So I guess you could say that Gary will always be associated with the

beautiful comforts and good food of his inn, and that seeing him so out of his element was a wonderful surprise.

All throughout that afternoon, I passed car after car driven by someone handing out water bottles to firemen, people bringing in water to snuff out hot spots the firemen couldn't get to, and trucking in giant barrels of water from other counties. What really astounded me about this fire was not its scope or its size. It was how many people I recognized were doing something about it.

Now, I'm a city girl, and everyone knows that. I've loved learning about Oberlin and its residents these last four weeks, soaking in the unfamiliarity like it were the sun on an island. I love exploring. But this — this was truly something to behold. Some clichés are clichés for a reason, and you can count among them, "actions speak louder than words."

I've never been more proud to serve a community like the one I've found here. I've never been so inspired. It's easy for anyone to chip away their faith in humanity, whether they live in the city or the country. It's another thing altogether to build that faith.

So I take my hat off to you, Oberlin. Your true colors have shown through brilliantly amidst the terrain of disaster, and it has not gone unnoticed. Bravo, this city girl says.

Bravo.

# Many donate food

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
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It didn't take long for word to spread of the need for water, sports drinks and food to sustain the men and women fighting fires in Decatur County this week.

Kirk Brown at Raye's Grocery said he let his employees know that until the fire is out, water and ice for the emergency crews were on him. He also donated food to make sandwiches.

Randy Ostmeyer at Culligan Water Conditioning Co. said they gave several five-gallon jugs of water out in the field.

Mandi Fick at Dollar General said the store set up on to be the drop-off point for donations. People started bringing in water, sports drinks, supplies like cups and food. Then Chief Dispatcher Marilyn Mack or Emergency Manager Jacque Boultinhouse would come in and pick up what was needed.

Mrs. Fick said she knew the people in the field didn't want too many people driving out there to drop things off, so the drop-off point was set up.

It's amazing the outpouring of items brought in, Mrs. Fick said, adding that she was in tears Tuesday night when she thought about the whole thing.

Donations didn't just fly in from Decatur County, she said, but people in surrounding counties heard about the fire and answered the call to help.

Her dad, Marvin Matchett, who used to live in Oberlin, said he saw the news about the fire on Facebook. He was on the air at KQNA Radio of Norton at the time. At 5:20 p.m., he said, he asked for trucks to carry donations to Oberlin. In no



time, a 24-foot trailer, the bed of a pickup and a car were loaded with water, sports drinks and other supplies and on the road to Oberlin.

"That's just what people do here," he said. "It's why we live in a small community."

He said one of the first calls he got was from Ron Hadley with Main Street IGA in Norton, who said while he didn't have a truck to use, he did have a pallet of water to donate.

The Atwood Hospital, said Mrs

Fick, brought over grapes, watermelon, cantaloupe and honeydew melons for the crews to eat last night. The Decatur County Hospital made sandwiches for the men and women in the field.

Tuesday night, Brenda Plousard and Renee Harman were back at Raye's getting meat, cheese and bread to make sandwiches. With help from a few volunteers, they had four bags full of fresh sandwiches made for the crews to eat when they got back to town. Mr.

Brown was there to help. Subway also donated sandwiches for the volunteers.

On Wednesday, Mrs. Fick said, she was told they had collected enough water and sports drinks.

Besides the items, said Mrs. Fick, cash donations were taken at Dollar General. She said she thought people had given a little over \$500. Any money that's left, she said, will go to the fire department.

# Proceeds from publication will be donated

This extra edition of *The Oberlin Herald* has been put together by the newspaper's staff, led by Assistant Publisher Kimberly Davis.

Davis and reporters Stephanie DeCamp and Carolyn Kelley-Plotts contributed stories and photos, as did Kevin Bottrell, general manager of *The Goodland Star-News*. In the office, graphic artist Crista Sauvage helped with pages and circulation manager Pat Cozad helped with photo selection. Editor Steve Haynes read copy.

DeCamp went out on the first call and followed the fires, in the field and in the office, through

Wednesday. Money raised through sales of the extra edition has been pledged to some use helping or honoring all of the officials and volunteers who helped suppress the fire, including fire fighters, emergency medical crews, farmers and business people, dispatchers, police and sheriff's officers and others, including those who lost property.

Davis, who is advertising manager of the paper, sold ads to cover printing and distribution costs. The edition is being distributed at newsstands for a donation and will be mailed to subscribers with the

Wednesday, July 4, issue. The staff at *The Oberlin Herald* is looking into options on what to do with the money raised through donations and any profits from the advertising.

Our heartfelt thanks to the firefighters and volunteers for putting the fire out. God Bless you all!



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Your on top of things! Way to go and thank you to the firemen and all of our volunteers.

We appreciate all you hard work to keep our community safe.



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Fredrickson Insurance Agency wants to say thank you to everyone who kept our neighbors safe and continue to volunteer. Volunteers are one of the many benefits of living in a rural community.

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