

Chamber elects new president, plans events for fall

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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The Decatur Area Chamber of Commerce has elected a new president, assigned a committee to organize a welcome packet for new residents and is stirring up delicious ideas for fall fund raisers.

David Swank, who owns the Penn Ave. Boutique with his wife, Jill, was elected president at the Chamber board's monthly meeting Wednesday. Amanda Grafel will remain as the vice president.

Mr. Swank replaces Candi Ketterl, who resigned halfway through her term because she works for the U.S. Farm Service Agency, which recently changed her schedule, putting her in the Atwood office three days a week, during the time that the Chamber usually meets. Mrs. Grafel said she thought

she was too busy to move up to president this year.

A big focus at this month's meeting was the idea of welcome packets for new residents. The project went by the wayside, said board member Ruth Miesner, and it's time to get it going again.

"We've got to clean up our act," Mrs. Miesner said. "This is ridiculous. By moving in with the Welcome Wagon, we can start working with the businesses and realtors, too. There are so many things that are good and positive about Oberlin."

The board decided that the packets will, at the least, include coupons, a business directory put together by Decatur Tomorrow, and other information about the town. They agreed to work with real estate agents and the city to find out when someone new

moves here, and to deliver the packets in person.

The committee plans to do this for new residents in all of Decatur County, not just in Oberlin. Board members Galen Olson, Mrs. Miesner, Carolyn Hackney and Mrs. Grafel will serve on the committee.

The Chamber's next fund raiser will be a tailgate supper from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Friday, Sept. 21, before the football game. They will be serving sloppy joes with chips and cookies.

Once the weather starts to turn, the board decided, it will switch up what it serves for the season's fund raisers, including popcorn, hot cider and hot chocolate. The fall fund raiser will start no sooner than the last week of September, and will be served in the same way this summer's root beer floats

were: every Friday from noon to 2 p.m. Over the summer, the board raised \$1,391 serving floats for nine weeks.

In other business, the board:

- Heard a report that 24 spaces have been sold to date for the annual craft fair the Thursday after Thanksgiving, Nov. 24, at The Gateway. There is room for up to 60 more booths. The Chamber will have a bake sale at the event, with every board member bringing two or three goodies made at home to sell.

- Heard that there is someone interested in joining the board and taking over writing and promotional duties. The board still has a vacant spot, so it was decided that Mr. Swank would contact the candidate.

- Heard a suggestion from Mr. Olson that the Chamber start a Junior Chamber

chapter for kids at the high school that could help with fund raising and other projects. It would be an excellent activity to put on their college applications, he said, and would be a great asset to the Chamber itself.

"And maybe someday," he said, "if we do a scholarship, they would have to meet certain criteria and do so much for it. It's a great way to get them involved in the community, and teach them how to organize and get things done."

The board members decided they would explore the subject further at their next meeting, at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 3, at the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center, at the corner of Penn Avenue and Commercial Street.

Sappa Park houses still in decent shape

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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The City Council toured the old youth-ranch houses out at Sappa Park during its Thursday meeting, and determined that the dormitory buildings are in good enough shape to still be used – or possibly sold.

Council and audience members alike went out to see what condition the buildings were in. They have been locked up since 2006, said Steve Zodrow, the city administrative assistant who came along for inspection.

Four buildings are more or less identical, with slight variations in floor plans. Each one had a kitchen, office, fireplace, bedrooms, a game area and what looked like a confinement room. The houses are built mostly of concrete block. What little black mold was found, everyone agreed, was long since dead. Also dead were the bugs and mice that had tried to make the buildings their home, as the previous tenants had laid traps throughout the buildings.

Carpet would need to be replaced, as would any furniture, Mayor Rob McFee said, noting the water damage that had seeped through into the basements. And of course, a fresh coat of paint would be needed for all four buildings.

"It would cost right around \$8,000 a building," said Councilman Tim Bowen, "for paint and labor. But that's the exterior, not the interior. That runs about 60 cents a square foot. And I'm sure in this area, we could get it a little cheaper than that."

Mr. Bowen, who works as a handyman here in town, also said

that the electric service would need to be reworked, as it can supply only 60 amps instead of the preferred 100.

"It's in awesome shape," said Mr. Bowen. "It just needs a little tender loving care; we could even sell it as is."

Sappa Park was built by the National Park Service, said Ruth Miesner, who came with her husband, Councilman Jim Miesner. Once the park was finished, it was deeded to the state, which then gave it to the city after the lake dried up.

Since then, the buildings have changed hands so many times, no one at the inspection could say how many organizations had used it. For the most part, Mr. McFee said, it's been used as a home for young men in some kind of legal trouble.

The only problem that really presented itself during the tour is what to do with the buildings, and how the city might profit from them. A foundation which works on Lyme disease has expressed interest in them, Mr. Miesner said, as well as the Girl Scouts. And the council has also discussed just selling them outright.

But finding someone to buy the ranch "as is" would be tricky, and refurbishing the place would require a lot of money for an investment that might not bring much return. But at least in the meantime, the council knows that the buildings are safe, and solid, and fixable should an opportunity present itself.

"What it really needs," said Councilman Josh Williby, looking around the dusty floor and old bed frames, "is to be lived in."



THREE-YEAR-OLD ERIC Kuhlman watched as his dad, Matt, filled his plate with food during a benefit Saturday night in Norcat. Eric has to go for chemotherapy every week in Omaha since removing a tumor from his right kidney. — Herald staff photo by Carolyn Plotts

Cancer benefit for boy a big success

By **CAROLYN PLOTTS**
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There was scarcely enough room for everyone to sit down at the benefit Saturday night for 3-year-old Eric Kuhlman held at the former Norcat school building.

Eric was diagnosed in July with a Wilm's tumor on his right kidney. He underwent surgery to remove the tumor, and since then has had to receive chemotherapy treatments every week in Omaha. Doctors say this treatment will last for six months.

Almost 300 people attended the event, with Eric's family as hosts, including his aunts, uncles, close family friends, parents and grandparents. The proceeds will be used to help his family with medical and transportation costs not covered by their insurance.

Shawn Carney of Colby, managing partner in this area for the Modern Woodmen, signed a huge check to match the first \$1,500 raised. He said several in the family were members of the fraternal society, which provides financial products to members.

The guest register showed people traveled from McCook, Oakley, Oberlin, Norton, Jennings and Clayton.

"We know the family, and this was one benefit we wouldn't miss," said Alice Barnett of rural Norcat.

Eric's mother, Brandy Kuhlman, said her family was overwhelmed by the turnout.

"We are so grateful to our friends, family and everyone who attended," she said. "We can't say 'thank you' enough."

Treasure hunt is all set

The Oberlin-Decatur County Chamber of Commerce says that 24 stops are listed on its map for this weekend's U.S. Highway 36 Treasure Hunt, which also includes a list of Oberlin stores that visitors might like.

The maps have been printed and will be available at all of the participating stores, including the convenience stores at the crossroads and the Chamber office, said Sharleen Wurm, Chamber board secretary.

The sale stretches all the way across Kansas, from Missouri into Colorado, says the U.S. Highway 36 Association on its website. The sale spans the state from Cheyenne

County in the west to Doniphan County on the Missouri River. Along the road, it draws flea markets, bake sales, food and community events. Oberlin, in fact, will be holding the Mini Sappa Antique Thresher and Engine Show at the fairground throughout the weekend, too.

Some people also set up their own booths and tables to sell their wares without any advertising, said Chamber Manager Carolyn Hackney.

"It's just so fun," said Mrs. Wurm. "Everyone sets their stuff out, and it's like a huge mini-mall. Last year we had more fun; my Chevy Blazer was so full you couldn't have packed another thing in it!"

Jazz band to perform

The season opener for the Western Plains Arts Association will feature the Queen City Jazz Band at 3 p.m. (Central Time) Sunday at the Goodland High School auditorium.

For ticket information, call Pat Ziegelmeier, executive director, at (785) 460-5518, or Amie Kendrick, (785) 460-3837, or go to www.wpaa.us.

Construction is quick

People were surprised Wednesday to drive west on U.S. 36 and find themselves blocked by a flagman and the road narrowed to one lane by construction, but before a complaint could be muttered, the working crew seemed to disappear.

The crew was on its last day on the project, said Darrell Shaw, a truck driver, and had managed to finish the chip seal before anyone from Oberlin could get too upset. Chip sealing, he said, is when the crew spreads down a layer of oil and then spreads rock to re-seal the cracks in

the road. The whole project covered 11 miles of road, he said.

According to the Kansas Department of Transportation, the chip sealing was done under a \$347,339 contract by Heft and Sons LLC out of Greensburg.

"It's the kind of job that makes people mad," Project Manager John Reed said, laughing. "It creates a lot of dust from the rocks at first, when you drive over it. But after about two or three days, it settles down and is gone."

Rawlins Clinic in Atwood

Rodney Dill, MD
 Charles Zerr, MD
 Dana Jewell, PA-C
 Michael Dorsch, PA

Monday-Friday
 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Saturday 9:00 a.m. - Noon

707 Grand Street
 Atwood, KS 67730
 (785) 626-3241



Patriot quote will be weekly

In keeping with Oberlin and Decatur County's red, white and blue patriotic theme, *The Oberlin Herald* will be running a quote from a former U.S. president or influential citizen from now until the general election in November. The quotes will appear on the editorial page each week, in keeping with the campaign planned by the group Paint Oberlin Patriotic.

Come join us at The Gateway Sept. 22 as we bring back the Firefighter's Ball.

Prime Rib Dinner

Dance the night away to the tunes of Mobile Music Express

Silent Auction

Get your tickets early for \$30 per person. Ticket prices change on Sept. 15 with an extremely limited number at the door.

Social Hour 5 p.m.

For ticket information call by Sept. 15
 Andrea at 470-1119
 Jolene 470-7475
 Kelsey (308) 737-7893

Casino Night

For the latest info like our facebook page: Decatur County Firefighter's Ball