

We must all fight for rights

To the Editor:
I'll get straight to the point: if you care at all about the future of this nation, I'm asking you to get engaged in this, the most important election of our lifetimes. I am concerned that if we do not reverse course in this election, the America we have known may be lost forever.

Reversing course includes taking back the White House from a man whose vision of America is, in my opinion, out of touch with the American mainstream. If President Obama is given another four years, I

Letters to the Editor

shudder to think what America will become. It is essential that every freedom-loving American unite behind Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan.

But it also includes returning control of the United States Senate to Republicans – not for the party's sake, but because Republicans are the only bulwark still standing in defense of liberty, fiscal sanity, free markets and the values that made America the greatest nation on earth.

Republicans are just four seats short of a majority in the Senate. Frankly, we've had some setbacks that make winning those four seats more challenging. But we've also received some good news: the Senate races in Ohio, Montana and Virginia are now close and Republicans are leading in Nebraska, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

I've committed the full resources of my political action committee, FreeState PAC, so I can, in turn, target critically needed resources to help Republicans win back the Senate. We need more senators who are committed, as I am, to defending freedom and our way of Life.

Should we fail to reverse course and save America in this year's elections, the cost to future generations will be incalculable.

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Hays

Party goes pro-abortion

To the Editor:

I found it quite revealing to see the list of people that the Democratic Party had as speakers at their convention. Included in the invitation list were the president of the pro-abortion organization, NARAL Pro-Choice America, and the chief executive of Planned Parenthood.

I think it should alarm Democrats that their party is supporting organizations such as Planned Parenthood that have been caught red-handed covering up for sexual predators. These organizations have also used their abortion services to "destroy" the evidence when their underage victims would become pregnant.

To see the evidence for yourself that the abortion industry is indeed protecting pedophiles, please visit www.ChildPredator.com. Should not the fact that the Democrat party had leaders of these groups, which protect pedophiles, speak at their convention make you angry or at least suspect?

If you are a Democrat, I kindly suggest that you take a second look at what your party is supporting.

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GETTING READY TO GO on the Creative Movements 5K Run/Walk on Saturday, Molly Olson helped her grandmother, Fern Moore, get her official number pinned on.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Runners support gymnastics

Thirty-one people signed up to participate in the Creative Movements Gymnastics Club 5K Fun Run/Walk on Saturday.

The race ended up with five kids and 25 adults running, jogging and walking around the roads in Sappa Park in the morning damp and fog.

The sun peeked out a little here and there, but for the most part, the runners were alone in a cottony white swirl while the walkers tended to clump together.

The first to cross the finish line was Kelly Stamm. He won the men's division, running the course in 21 minutes, 25 seconds. Kerrie Wahlmeier was the first woman across the line. She clocked in at 23:03. For their efforts, each won a medal, gift certificates

to Pizza Hut and movie tickets to the Sunflower Cinema.

John Otis finished second in 31:49 and David Blau, third in 33:25 for the men while Jakobi Blau was second in 23:27 and Kyleana Blau third in 26:51 for the women.

Judith Isbell won the kids division, followed by Makenzie Urban and Kennedy Jensen. All won tickets to the Sunflower Recreation bowling alley. The Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. helped by providing the movie and bowling passes and Pizza Hut provided the gift certificates.

The club will be performing at halftime Friday of the football game between Decatur Community High and Perkins County, Neb., at Smick Field.

Filmgoers partake of festival

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Forty-one people showed up to a showing of the Manhattan Short Film Festival Sunday at the Sunflower Cinema, which was touted as "the first global international film festival."

Audience members cozied up for a two-part, two hour mosaic of shorts revealing international thoughts, experiences and values. After the showing, they were able to vote on the film they liked best. On entry with the \$12 ticket, everyone received a program with a brief outline of each film, where it was from and a quote from the director about it. They also received a voting card.

Afterward, the foyer was abuzz with people talking and laughing, trying to decide which was their favorite. Should it be the heart-breaking one ("Superman, Spiderman or Batman") about the little boy whose mother needs a new heart? Or perhaps the starkly political film ("Two and Two"), in which a Middle Eastern boy in class refuses to accept that 2 + 2 = 5?

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., helped bring the festival here. She said she was disappointed by the

turnout.

"People complain there's nothing to do" she said, "and then don't show up when there is."

Still, she said she had a good time, and said the festival will likely be back next year.

"I liked it mostly," she said. "A couple films, I don't know how they made the cut, but it was enlightening, and I had a good time."

Not all of the features were so somber, and some filmgoers valued a good laugh over a dramatic statement. There was a delightful short from the Netherlands, "A Curious Conjunction of Coincidences," that showed how three bad days over a long period of time can lead to the end of a giant city. And certainly the festival's closer, "Voice Over," was an excellent way to end the evening,

as the French narrator attempted to explain the feeling, repeatedly and dramatically, over and over again ... of a first kiss. Not one person was seen without a smile on their face after that one.

The only thing that could have been improved was the size of the screen, and therefore, the subtitles, which at times were hard to read, and for the near-sighted, it was likely impossible. But other than that, those who showed up seemed to be happy they had come.

"I thought it was excellent," said David Swank as he left the theater. "I'm really impressed with the diversity there was, everything from comedy and drama to political intrigue. I'm really glad something like this came here."

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of Osteopathic Medicine in Downers Grove, Illinois (2009). He completed his Family Medicine Residency at the North Colorado Family Medicine Residency Program in Greeley, Colorado (2012). Dr. Lindau is certified with the American Board of Family Medicine.

To make an appointment with Dr. Lindau, call 308-344-4110.



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Property notices have changed through years

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
sdecamp@nwkansas.com

With all the debate and discussion, you may have been wondering, what does "blighted property" even mean, and how serious is it to get one of these letters from the city?

Oberlin's blighted property ordinance as we know it now was first passed by the City Council in December 2009, when efforts began on a cleanup. In some form or another, it had always existed, though it wasn't as detailed, and enforcing it was left to the police's discretion. In 2009, the ordinance said that a program would be established to address blighted properties within the city, that it would be voluntary and that policies would be adopted to carry out its goals.

What the ordinance has become is a trickier question. Jan Ackerman, the city's code enforcement officer, was hired in December 2010 because the city had received two complaints about the same property at 711 E. Maple. After that, the current program outlining how blighted property would be handled came into being.

The ordinance is enforced by a Board of Health, which includes the mayor (Rob McFee), the city clerk (Karen Larson) and the city marshal or chief of police (Troy Haas). Anyone in violation of the codes, in their judgment (including blighted property, junked cars, weeds, and so forth) can be charged with a misdemeanor, and if convicted in city court, fined between \$10 and \$100, given 30 days jail time or both.

So has anyone actually ever been thrown in jail for having messy property? Police Chief Troy Haas said no, the city wants to work with property owners.

"That would never happen," he said. "There has not been any prosecution on this ordinance. We're just about working with people. The letter is just a start, a way to communicate before anything gets out of hand."

Mr. Haas said that before Mrs. Ackerman was hired, the police handled any complaints about property.

"In all that time," he said, "I think I wrote maybe two tickets."

But because the problem was growing, the council decided it had to do something, and that's when a more detailed program for combatting blighted property was outlined.

Health nuisances are those things that will get you a letter from the city, telling you to clean up. While the initial letter sent to residents ap-

parently offended some people – it became a prime topic of conversation at the Aug. 16 council meeting – the letter has been changed to a milder tone and a simple warning.

The things that will get you in trouble include having "filth, excrement, lumber, rocks, dirt, can paper, trash, metal or any other offensive or disagreeable thing or substance ..." This includes dead animals, anything that smells bad, stagnant ponds or pools of water, overgrown grass and weeds, abandoned refrigerators, or anything else that causes "injury, annoyance, or inconvenience of the public." The ordinance goes on to include any "fence, structure, thing or substance on a street, sidewalk, alley or public ground" that could obstruct passage.

The 24-page ordinance itself covers all manner of things that could be a danger or nuisance to neighbors or businesses. It lists junked, wrecked, abandoned and inoperable cars, as well as uncut weeds and yards.

Article 5 of the ordinance, which takes up more than half the space, applies to "minimum housing codes," which are the basic regulations that any structure being used as a home should follow. For example, any dwelling must have at least two entrances in case of a fire.

Anyone may obtain a copy from the city office at The Gateway.

Violations can be reported by two residents of Oberlin who are 18 or older and sign a complaint, by the code enforcement officer or by the Board of Health, chief of police or fire chief. The enforcement officer has the right, according to the ordinance, to enter any private property – another point of contention.

Once someone has received a notice from the city, they're given 10 days to fix the problem or request a hearing. If the owner does neither, or the ownership of the property is in question, the enforcement officer can ask the board to clean it up anyway. If the board agrees, then the city's cost for cleaning up the property will be billed to the resident. If an owner doesn't pay, the charges can be applied to the property tax bill at the end of the year.

But city officials say none of these things has ever happened. People have requested hearings, and a solution usually is worked out with the "10 days rule" being more on paper than in practice. Mrs. Ackerman, in an e-mail, said that she usually doesn't follow up on a complaint until the 15th, sometimes 20th day after the letter is sent anyway.

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