

By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor

Each January, when our newspaper staff votes on the top stories of the previous year, I'm amazed at how much really happens in our small community in 365 days. I'm always a bit surprised when I look back, even though I've written about much of that news.

Looking back on 2009, it was no different.

Just look at this year's major local stories—weather that included some big hailstorms, major fires, a new pool dedication, a big land purchase by the city for economic development, investment in a new reading program at Chase County Schools, new medical professionals who moved here and some very interesting police investigations.

Chase County was also right smack in the middle again of major state news, as well, with more Republican River Basin issues at the forefront.

As it has been for so many previous years, those ongoing water issues were ranked by the staff as the No. 1 news story once again. This year, the water "news" was centered around the constitutionality of LB701 regarding its property tax assessment and the occupation tax on irrigated acres. Also, as the year progressed, it came to light the Nebraska Dept. of Natural Resources would push for NRD action regarding rules that would shut down some wells during water-short years on acres close to the river, a major economic factor in our communities.

Weather was another big part of the news of 2009.

This year's bountiful rains, the most in a number of years, also brought their challenges during planting season and harvesting. Then, multiple hailstorms damaged many of those crop acres that were so hard to get planted. And this time, the storms also wreaked havoc on local homes and businesses in the city of Imperial.

May brought a lot of celebrating, as the community turned out for the one nice Memorial weekend day for the new pool's dedication and grand opening. Several groups worked together on the event. The pool will certainly be a major community asset for years to come.

The devastating October fire at Harchelroad Motors also displaced a major Imperial business, but only temporarily, as the firm moved across the street and continues to operate in temporary headquarters at its new showroom. They plan to rebuild.

On another sad note, the community lost too many of its young adults in vehicle accidents the past year.

But, whether the news is good or bad, Imperial residents always come together. Neighbors helped neighbors after the summer's big storms, consoled families who lost loved ones and aided a business to get back on its feet after a fire.

Whatever the news, Imperial residents are always there to celebrate or console. 2010 is likely to bring different news in Imperial, but I predict its people will remain the same good, compassionate neighbors they have always been.

Welcome 2010!