

## Jail makes a little bit of money



Kim Schmidt, Kearney Hub Employees of Masonry Unlimited brick the southwest corner of the new Buffalo County Jail. The county has earned more than \$16,000 contracting out cells at the portion of the new jail that opened last year.

Posted: Saturday, February 19, 2011 5:30 am | Updated: 2:11 am, Sat Feb 19, 2011.

**Jail makes a little bit of money** By KIM SCHMIDT Hub Staff Writer | 0 comments

KEARNEY — Nearly a year after it opened, the Buffalo County Jail is making more money from out-of-county inmates than expected.

Buffalo County moved inmates from the old jail to the new jail on March 31, 2010, after phase I of the Justice Center building project was completed. By April, the county began doing limited contracting with other counties to house their inmates.

The number of beds being used for out-of-county inmates varies depending on the number of contracts. The county didn't designate the number of beds in the new jail that would be used to house other counties' inmates.

"With being only half built for our support services and medical unit, we did not want to push it too hard," said Sheriff Neil Miller.

The jail contracts with two surrounding counties for overflow and for female prisoners at a cost of \$45 per day, plus medical expenses.

Although Miller didn't make predictions for contract revenue in the planning stages of the new jail, he said figures are better than he expected. Miller and the Buffalo County Board of Supervisors planned only for the county's needs, not the needs of other counties.

They did, however, anticipate having unused beds that could be contracted out. In 2010, contract inmate revenue was \$16,135, with 2,457 total inmate bookings. The average daily population for all inmates in 2010 was 103, with an average inmate staying 15.25 days.

The contract revenue goes into the county's general fund.

"We agreed to contract prisoners when we could to help pay for the cost of the facility, using the future use beds as revenue for the county," Miller said.

Phase IB of the Justice Center project will be to build the remaining 45 beds, giving the jail a total of 205 beds. The phase will also have a medical unit, additional programming space for inmate activities, administrative office space, and a public entryway and visitation area. The project includes an addition to the courts area.

## Justice Center progress

A relatively mild winter has helped speed construction on phase II of the Buffalo County Justice Center.

Phase IB of the Justice Center project was to construct the jail with 160 of the 205 beds. Phase II, currently under construction, will add the remaining beds along with a medical unit, additional programming space for inmate activities, administrative office space, and a public entryway and visitation area.

The project includes a new courts complex with courtrooms, offices and judges' chambers.

Bill Barritt, a senior project manager with Beckenhauer Construction, said he expects the county to be able to occupy the new courts complex and additional jail space in late October or early November.

"(The weather) has helped us out quite a bit actually, mostly to get the roof enclosed. That allowed us to continue work inside," Barritt said.

"As far as exterior goes, we just started the exterior brick. That's started on the south side and will continue on the west to the north. Inside, we're continuing with mechanical, electrical and plumbing rough-ins in the wall and above the ceiling. We have actually started drywall. In the area we call the court area, we've started hanging drywall. ... All the jail cells are set and we're connecting plumbing, electrical and heating and cooling to the backside of those."