Readers curious about census details

By News-Times Staff
Published: Saturday, March 27, 2010 1:17 AM CDT

The following questions were asked recently on the Wonderline:

Q: Since there seems to be so much importance on population in certain districts due to politics, funds, grants, etc. how and who gets the credit for men and women who are in prisons, etc., if they are from other states or locations?

A: Incarcerated persons are considered residents of the city/county where the prison is located. For example, Johnson County in Nebraska is said to have one of the biggest explosions in population since 2000 (having the second fastest growing area), which is being credited to the construction and implementation of the new prison in Tecumseh. Because of the new correctional facility, that county has increased by more than 13 percent since the beginning of this decade.

So, likewise, the inmates at the Nebraska for Women will be counted as residents of York County.

Q: I saw where only about 20 percent of the people have even returned their census forms, so how is it that they can make projections as to population growth and loss?

A: The estimates, released this past week, were in reference to 2009. Each year, the census bureau releases estimates. That does not mean they are accurate, as they are just theories. When the 2010 census is complete and counted, those figures will be the official numbers.

Right now, the population estimates (for 2009) are based on vital statistics, other public records and survey data. And again, all population estimates will be superseded by the full head-count of persons in the 2010 Census.

Q: What is supposed to be the state’s fastest growing county?

A: The fastest growing county in Nebraska is said to be Sarpy County, which has increased in population by more than 25 percent since 2000.

Q: What happens to our Congressional districts if it’s found that too many people moved from Western Nebraska into the metro area?

A: In a report compiled by David Drozd, a research coordinator for the Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Nebraska-Omaha: “The strong growth in Douglas and Sarpy Counties has led to Congressional District 2 having a relatively large share of the state’s population. While it is not likely that Nebraska will lose a Congressional seat after the 2010 Census, the boundaries of the current districts will change, with Congressional District 2 becoming smaller and Congressional District 3 becoming larger.”

Q: Also, can you explain what “natural increase” means, as it pertains to population?

A: Natural increase is a population growth due to there being more births than there are deaths. Amazingly, Drozd (see above answer for his credentials) says 52 Nebraska counties saw natural increase between 2000 and 2009, with more than 60 counties have a natural increase in each of the last two one-year time periods.

Q: And one more question about census numbers. Is it true that Omaha has moved up in the rankings of metro sizes in the United States?

A: We checked with the U.S. Census Bureau and found that this is what is being projected. The bureau
says that Omaha’s growth of 10,000 persons has propelled them ahead of New Haven-Milford, Conn., to now be the 59th largest metro area in the U.S.

Incidentally, the Lincoln metro switched places with Fort Collins-Loveland, Colo., and now stands as the nation’s 157th largest metro.

Q: I read in the article yesterday about the poor response to the census in York County. I’ve talked with a number of people who say they haven’t even received it yet. That includes me. What are we supposed to do if we haven’t received it?

A: The U.S. Census Bureau says that if a household hasn’t received a questionnaire by April 12, they should call 1-866-872-6868 to obtain one. These phone lines will be open from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m., seven days a week, through July 30.

Q: How many motor graders does York County own? How many snow blowers are there?

A: The county owns 14 motor graders. The county also owns two snow blowers.

Q: When is the village of Bradshaw going to become compliant with state law which says that they have to designate and contract with a licensed animal shelter? This became state law through LB 494.

A: The law, passed in 2009, requires all municipalities to designate and contract with a licensed animal shelter. The majority of municipalities in this area have contracted with York Adopt-A-Pet to provide those services.

Wonderline could not confirm whether or not the village has contracted with a license animal shelter, as the municipal office was closed when staffers tried to call. It’s possible the village board has already agreed to contract with an entity. If not, they will have to do so as soon as possible, as the mandated deadline to finalize that issue was Oct. 1, 2009.

Q: Did there used to be a town called Wayland?

A: Yes, there was. And Wonderline stands corrected — the town was actually in Polk County, not York County.

Q: Is there someone interested in panty hose?

A: Wonderline’s not sure.

Q: I was watching CMT Top 20 and noticed that Lance Smith is no longer the host of the show. Where did he go and what is he doing now?

A: According to an interview with Entertainment Weekly, Smith moved to California to pursue an acting career.

Q: Vehicles are parked all over town, many for weeks at a time and never being moved. Some have no plates or they have expired plates. How do some of them get away with it and others don’t?

A: The York Police Department actively patrols the city and chronicles properties where there are unlicensed vehicles, junk vehicles, etc. (To look further, go to Page 2 of the daily newspaper, to the “Permanent Record” section where these calls are listed). Individuals are ticketed if they don’t correct the situation. If someone has an issue with unlicensed vehicles, they are encouraged to call the police department and report them, at 363-2640.

Q: A year ago, the county commissioners said they were going to fill the position of zoning administrator by having a county employee do the job instead of the private contractor they have been using since 2003. Why has this not happened yet?

A: Orval Stahr continues to be the county’s zoning administrator and works under contract. There’s been no recent discussions about that changing.

Q: On Channel 10-11, what happened to Serese’s co-host? I don’t remember his name. Just want to know where he is.

A: Jon Vanderford, the evening co-anchor with Serese Cole, hasn’t gone far. In February, KOLN-KGIN
10/11 announced that Vanderford would be co-anchoring, instead, the morning news with his wife, Taryn. He had been co-anchoring the evening newscasts since 2003.

Q: I’m a Democrat. Does that mean I can’t vote in my district’s race for commissioner?

A: Yes. That is correct. Only Republicans will be able to vote in county commissioner races because all the candidates are Republicans. The Primary Election, in May, will actually decide the race, because there are no Democrats for the Primary winners to go against in the November General Election. Whomever gets the most votes in the Primary, in their district, will be the only person listed on the General Election ballot.

Q: What can be done with old audio cassette tapes?

A: Many people are selling their old cassettes on eBay and other types of internet sites — there may be someone out there who is looking for that music! You never know.

Also, old audio cassettes are considered electronic waste, so the owner should probably check with their local landfill and/or recycling center to see about options for disposal and re-use.

Q: I’m confused. With the York County Health Challenge, how do you figure out the percentage of weight loss?

A: You take the number of pounds lost and divide it by the starting weight.

Q: Another question about the Health Challenge — I see some of the teams’ “after pictures” and weights are already on the News-Times website. When can we expect to see them all?

A: Eric J. Eckert, online director at the YNT, says he hopes to have them all posted by Saturday morning, Monday at the latest. Teams are still weighing in and it appears the majority have yet to do so. So it looks like the results won’t be available until late Friday night — and then of course, they have to be posted.

Q: What happens if a Health Challenge team refuses to have a final weigh-in? I’ve heard that some teams are doing that.

A: They will be listed as not weighing in, and obviously, won’t be in the running for the big prize because there will be no final weight to refer to.

Q: If this is true, I’m going to be shocked. I heard at coffee that people in Aurora could feel the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. Is that possible? And if it is true, why on earth could people in Aurora feel it and no other communities around here did? It sounds pretty far-fetched to me.

A: Actually, this is only partially true.

Persons in Aurora did not physically feel the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. But there were indications in a test well, which is located in Aurora, that there was some residual motion in the aquifer at the time of the earthquakes.

According to a story in the Aurora News-Register, University of Nebraska-Lincoln scientists said the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile temporarily affected the groundwater levels in Nebraska.

The hydroseismic activity — the effect that seismic waves have on groundwater — likely would have been missed if not for the strip cart recorder instrument in the water well five miles southeast of Aurora. A scientist checked the Aurora well March 2 and found a minor excursion, or spike, in the water levels chart corresponding to the Feb. 27 earthquake in Child and another corresponding to the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti. Korus is the groundwater resources coordinator in UNL’s Conservation and Survey Division, part of the School of Natural Resources.

The News-Register reported that the Aurora well contains a strip chart recorder, technology dating back to the 1930s, that uses pen and ink connected to a floating bobber. When the surface of the water moves, the motion is translated from the bobber to a pen moving along a strip of paper. Groundwater level changes in response to earthquake activity are called hydroseisms. Most of the equipment measuring groundwater in Nebraska has been replaced by digital monitors which, because they are not set to continuously monitor levels, are less likely to record such hydroseisms.

“It’s not the first time the Aurora well registered a hydroseism,” wrote reporter Laurie Pfeifer. Apparently other major earthquakes in the past also have registered, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and
resulting tsunami.

The Aurora well is checked once every month as part of an extensive monitoring well network in Nebraska that is used for observing seasonal and longterm changes in groundwater availability.

Q: The Osborne family has an ad on Channel 10/11 in which they state that they have happily lived in Lincoln for 40-plus years. I was wondering how Dr. Tom could have legally served as a U.S. Representative from the Third Congressional District.

A: Early in 2000, Osborne announced that he would run in Nebraska's Third District as a Republican. He had grown up in Hastings, which is in the Third District, and claimed a home in Lemoyne, near North Platte, as his district residence. However, he hadn't lived regularly in what is now the Third District since at least 1964; for most of that time he'd lived in Lincoln, the heart of the First District. But because of that Lemoyne home, he was able to run for and serve in the Third District.