

Group to host community forum

By Casey McCormick
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Community members from the county gathered Monday morning to discuss bringing people together with information about the status of the Good Samaritan Village in the aftermath of last week's fire.

The group will host a forum on Wednesday, Nov. 3, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the St. Francis high school auditorium.

The head offices of the Good Samaritan Village, in Sioux Falls, S.D., have been contacted and will have a representative present.

Members of the Good Samaritan Village Advisory Board and employees, Community Builders and individuals from Bird City and St. Francis were at the Monday meeting.

Several of the employees held back their emotions when it came to speaking about how they are

coping and what their concerns are for the future.

"We've lost a family of 64 members," said Janet Siegfried in reference to the number of workers from the facility.

"We are not doing well and the longer we wait (to reopen) there will not be the same residents or employees coming back."

The forum is hoped to better educate the public on the status of the Village. It should also provide answers to the many questions being asked.

A suggestion that came from the meeting was to have county residents sign a petition of support to rebuild the structure and keep the operation here.

One of the Advisory Board members present was Troy Hilt.

"We don't know what is going to happen, but we can show our community support."



FIRE FIGHTERS made holes in the roof of the Good Samaritan to access the fire and get it under control.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

No decisions made for nursing home

By Karen Krien
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It has been about a week since the fire at the Good Samaritan Village, St. Francis, started but no decisions have been made on the future of the nursing home.

Rumors have ranged anywhere from razing the burned area and rebuilding, to not reopening.

Jeff Paulsen, Village administrator, told the Village Advisory Board on Thursday that he had not heard of any plans for the Good Samaritan Society, located in Sioux Falls, S.D., to leave the county. The insurance carrier organized the cleanup of the facility and equipment. A local contractor, Travis Milne, had been hired to wall off the burned area on both the east and west sides. The Society was also sending a staff construction engineer to assess the damage.

The St. Francis nursing home was almost full with 48 residents before the fire. Residents were relocated in other nursing homes. The Roberts twins, Royce and Russell, residents at the Village for over 36 years, were moved to Sharon Springs where they celebrated their 80th birthday. One of their caretakers, Gloria Bracelin, said they were adjusting well to their new surroundings.

Cheryl Lee, Home Health director, had arrived at the high school gymnasium shortly after residents had been moved there. She reported that each resident was carefully checked and despite their fragile bodies, not one resident had a skin tear.

Shane Guggemus, chief of police, said he had gone to the high school expecting chaos but was happy to find the residents doing well and everything was under control.

Mr. Paulsen said the state fire marshal, who was on the scene when the fire occurred, commended Janelle Bowers, emergency medical service director, who had taken charge in the absence of Ryan Murray, emergency manager. Mr. Murray said he was on his way home from training but was helping where he could by phone.

Food had been prepared by Bonnie Straub and Cindy Neitzel, cooks at the Village, and Alice Kinen, head cook at the school. Helping with serving were Margaret Poling and Allison Grice. Helping clean up were Helen Paulsen and Becca Landers. The residents had already walked more than usual and it had been a long afternoon so students brought tables from the cafeteria to the gym so they could eat.

Dr. Rebecca Allard and Tyler Raile, physician's assistant, were on hand to check residents. Calls were made to family members by Village staff and the hospital staff was helping find places for the residents to go.

Since the residents had only what they were wearing, the United Methodist Thrift Store volunteers brought up clothes in a variety of sizes, making sure they had some clothing to take with them. These clothes were given to the residents.

That's what we are here for, said Carol Forsythe, one of the volunteers, when thanked for the

generosity.

The next day, the Village staff with the help of others, started gathering residents' personal belongings, bagging them to be sent to the nursing homes where they were now living. In the south part of the middle wing which burned, many of those items were destroyed.

Some of the nurses and certified nurses aides will have the opportunity to work at other area Good Samaritan facilities with Good Samaritan Society paying mileage and travel time, Mr. Paulsen said. However, those in housekeeping, dietary and the office will most likely be looking for employment.

On Monday, many employees were worried. Their salaries would be paid until the end of the month and they were not sure what would happen then.

Deb Gohl who was the head of

the kitchen, said she was worried about how she was going to pay her mortgage and bills. Others said they didn't know where they would all find jobs and didn't want to move.

Bonnie Straub, who had worked at the Village for over 40 years cried as she told about the love and care the workers had for each other as well as the residents. It would never be the same as some workers and residents would never come back.

Mr. Paulsen said the Society was sending an employee assistant support person to talk to employees this week.

Help being planned

People are concerned. The Community Builders group met early Monday morning to plan a forum to provide information (see related article).

The St. Francis City Council spent considerable time at their Monday

evening meeting, discussing how they could help. Until more is known about the Society's plans, they decided to send letters stating their support in rebuilding the nursing home.

The Village Advisory Board, at their meeting, agreed that Sioux Falls needed to make a decision. The board is hoping that the Society will want to rebuild in the right way to offer a continuum of care with independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing.

"Build on what we have, a model facility - quality care in a quality facility. Let's make it better - a vision for our community and for elder care."

The public can assist them, Kevin Berens, member, said, by voicing their concern and desires to preserve the property, the service and the community.



CONGRESSMAN Jerry Moran (right) visits with Deb Gohl, Paula Austin and Cathy Loop.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

Congressman visits to see fire damage

By Karen Krien
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Congressman Jerry Moran was in St. Francis Monday morning to observe the damage done by fire at the Good Samaritan Village. He met briefly with Jeff Paulsen, administrator, as well as some of the staff.

He had heard reports on the fire and how the staff had responded. He reassured employees that he will look into what can be done to help them.

Darla Walz, employee, referred to the employees' situation as a "small Katrina."

He commended the way the St. Francis community had come together to help in a difficult situation.

It is good, he said, to live our lives in special places we call home and see people helping people.

Congressman Moran, along with Mr. Paulsen and Ward Cassidy, candidate for representative of the 120 district, met with Sandy Sandoval, federal fire investigator for the Village's insurance company. Wearing hard hats, the three men followed Mr. Sandoval into the burned area of the facility where they looked at the damage.

When the fire started, a sub contractor's crew was spraying insulation, a product called SoyTherm. The two part component that is mixed and

sprayed on forming a foam that expands in 15 seconds. Mr. Sandoval said the insulation forms a vapor which could be volatile.

Mr. Sandoval said he was there for the preliminary walk around and it would be one to two weeks before all interested parties including two other insurance company representatives would meet. He said electrical engineers will also be called in to help determine the origin and cause of the fire.

George Harper, St. Francis fire chief, said he was proud of the work the firemen did. There was no way, he said, that firemen could have gone up into the attic so they were forced to put holes in the roof to get rid of the heat and stop the fire.

Backup water supplies had been called for but were not used, he said. It had taken the firemen about four hours to contain the fire. Their Scott Pak bottles used for oxygen were depleted and needed to be filled several times.

There was little wind which helped the situation, he said. Had the wind been blowing out of the south, it would have been necessary to remove people living in the apartments to the north of the facility.

No one was hurt, Chief Harper said, and that was the main concern.

other places. Those 12 and under can see the movie for \$3; all others pay \$5 a ticket.

The city of St. Francis owns and pays for the upkeep of the building including the cost of the movies and shipping. Paula Keller, Theater Committee member and city council member, said the theater is like the swimming pool and library - they do not make enough money to keep the doors open. Without the city's contributions, Mrs. Keller said, they would not exist.

The new equipment will be a major upgrade, she said, and will be necessary to continue to show

Donations needed for theater

By Karen Krien
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The letters have gone out to St. Francis high school alumni and others who donated when the seats were put in the Cheyenne Theater. These letters are again about the theater only this time, equipment is needed.

The Theater Committee recently decided that if the theater was going to continue showing movies, they needed to upgrade their equipment from 35 mm film to digital cinema.

Digital cinema is the newest technology for movie theaters. The movie is on a hard drive CD which means the cost of shipping the 70-pound film and canisters will be reduced dramatically, there will be no labor of threading, splicing and mounting the film and the picture quality will be superb.

Could the old 35 mm movies be a thing of the past? There is a chance, said Robert Grace, Theater Committee member. It is so much easier for film companies to make and distribute movies on a disk that they may decide to quit making them.

There were so many people who donated both time and money to get the theater back up and running 18 years ago, it would be a shame to see it close because of not being able to use the digital equipment.

Movie tickets at the Cheyenne Theater are still cheaper than many

movies in the future. The people will need to decide if they want to keep the theater open.

The cost of the digital cinema equipment is around \$75,000 to \$100,000. The St. Francis City Council has committed \$12,500 a year in a five year understanding that future councils are not bound to this plan. Support from other sources is needed.

Complete details on digital cinema and how to donate are on the new theater website: <http://cheyennetheater.com>. Donations may be directed to the city office.

Club Clip

McDonald Area Development

The McDonald Area Development met on Wednesday, Oct. 6, with eight members present. Reports were given. Lois Morelock reported on the Highway 36 Day. She said there people from 18 states who came for the sales. She also said that the McDonald Area Development members really came out to help. She especially thanked the Legion Auxiliary members, Phyllis Wingfield and Lisa Johnson. The bank was a big help by printing all the maps of sales.

The treasurer reminded all

that the 2011 dues are now due. The Halloween soup supper was discussed. It will be on Sunday evening, Oct 31, at 5:30. Children who wish to participate in breaking the pinata should be present at 6 p.m.

Election of officers was held. Joan Tongish made a motion to retain the present officers. Motion passed. Officers will again be: Ray Johnson, president; Kay Miller, vice president; Rose Gordon, secretary; Lois Morelock, treasurer and Vera Kacirek, publications.



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