

Take advantage of the best local guide to what's on TV next week with The Telegram's handy schedule of programming.

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Tuesday,
April 13, 2004

Norton, Kansas
Home of Lester Fredderick

Briefly

Cleanup postponed

The city and county-wide cleanup planned for this week has been postponed until next week, Monday-Wednesday, due to muddy roads.

No-show tea helps with costs

Because April is child abuse prevention month, the court-appointed special advocates of the 17th Judicial District are holding their annual no-show benefit tea to raise money for the program and to heighten awareness of child abuse and neglect.

"The tea is something everyone can participate in without even leaving their home," said Joan Mann, board representative. "Invitations to donate were sent out in March with tea bags for people to enjoy."

For more information, contact Elaine Mann at 877-2019 or Joan Mann at 877-5618.

High school orientation set

An orientation session for the parents of eighth graders (next year's freshmen) will be held at 7 p.m. in the music room of the junior/senior high school on Monday.

Principal Lary Stull and Counselor Jennifer Hauser will host the meeting, which will include Kansas Board of Regents Qualified Admissions requirements, Norton graduation requirements, the enrollment process, school policies and expectations.

Weather

Forecast:

Tonight — Clear with lows in the mid 30s. South winds 5 to 15 mph.
Wednesday — Mostly sunny and warmer with highs in the upper 70s. South winds 10 to 15 mph with higher gusts.
Wednesday Night — Partly cloudy and not as cool. Lows in the mid 40s. South winds 10 to 15 mph and gusty.
Thursday — Mostly sunny with highs around 80. West winds 10 to 15 mph.
Thursday Night — Partly cloudy in the evening then clearing.

Howell report:

Friday High 47, Low 39, .18 Prec.
Saturday High 46, Low 32
Sunday High 58, Low 28, 6" Snow
Monday High 51, Low 25
Month ago High 51, Low 25
April precipitation 1.62 inches
Year-to-date precipitation 4.29 inches
(Readings taken at the Paul and Pat Howell farm 10 Miles North and 1/3 Mile East of Norton)

Prayer

God of light, thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. Help us to see and experience your love that surrounds us each day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

County a step closer to new landfill

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

After months of work and waiting it looks like Norton County will get a new landfill this summer.

On Monday the county commissioners received a notice from the state that the Kansas Department of Health and Environment has set a public comment period before issuing a permit for the landfill.

The comment period will be from Thursday through May 17. Anyone wanting to comment can call (785) 296-1592, e-mail pgraves@kdhe.state.ks.us or write

Paul Graves, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Bureau of Waste Management, 1000 SW Jackson, Suite 320, Topeka, Kan. 66612-1366. Letters must be postmarked by May 17 and received by the state within one week of that to be considered.

The state will issue written responses to all formal comments.

"Unless there's any negative comment on this, it will pass," Commissioner John Miller said patting the state documents. "We should have a permit in 60 days."

After the waiting period the state will issue its final decision on the permit.

The commissioners talked with County Road and Bridge Supervisor Tom Brannan about purchasing equipment to put down the six inches of dirt each night required by the state permit to keep the trash from blowing.

Mr. Brannan said that it would be tough to scrape the dirt away each morning because you would get trash along with the dirt. However, he said, it would be unthinkable to leave the dirt there each night

since that would add 10 to 15 feet to the landfill each month in just dirt.

The commissioners said that they had heard there is a slurry of gluey stuff that can be applied to the pit each night that will keep the trash from blowing. They said they wanted to look into the cost.

Mr. Brannan said that he thought the county would need a compactor to increase the life of the landfill. The commissioners agreed. Mr. Brannan said he would look at the cost of new and used ones.

Residents need help with living

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

Because the residents at Grant House and Eisenhower House are mentally handicapped and in the care of the State of Kansas, they must have court appointed guardians. Sometimes those guardians are their parents, sometimes not.

Debbie is one of the lucky ones. She has a very supportive family. Her father, who lives in Texas, comes to see her two or three times a year. He calls her frequently and sends her cards every holiday.

She has a brother and sister who also visit her.

When Debbie first came to Eisenhower House 15 years ago she exhibited self-injurious behavior. Now, with the aid of a walker, she is mobile and the self-appointed greeter to visitors at "Ike House".

Like many of the other women at Eisenhower, Debbie has little to no language skills. But through body language, and some simple sign language, like yes, no, and thank you, they are able to communicate.

Some have developed their own signs. Pointing to their head means they don't feel well and pointing to their mouth means they are hungry.

Many of the residents in both houses came from state institutions.

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Dennis enjoys being outside. One of his favorite pastimes is going for walks with one of the staff. He likes to watch the cars and he especially likes it when semi-trucks pass by. — Photo by Carolyn Plotts

Trailers would help with recycling

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County Commissioners are looking at getting trailers to make it easier for residents to drop off their recyclable materials.

The trailers cost from \$9,000 to \$25,000, depending on size, said Solid Waste Supervisor Curt Archibald.

Commissioner John Miller said the county could probably get a grant to pay for recycling.

Mr. Archibald showed the commissioners several models and said the trailer that is being sent to Oakley has five bins. Atwood, Brewster and Rexford each have a trailer, while Gove has two. Colby also uses the trailers.

Commissioner Leroy Lang asked if the recycling trailers work elsewhere.

"Well it's the only thing they have for recycling," Mr. Archibald said. "They don't have curb-side pickup like Norton County does."

Mr. Archibald said they needed to talk to Lenora and Almena to see what people in those communities think about getting the trailers. He said both towns have built their own trailers, which they park and let people put their recyclables in and then pull around town for curb-side pickup.

He said he didn't know if the trailers would work in Almena with the way they do it now unless they put their cardboard in one bin, cans in another and glass in a third.

Mr. Lang said maybe Almena didn't need one of the new trailers.

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Quinton Porter was among the many youngsters who gathered on the lawn of the Norton County courthouse Saturday to meet the Easter Bunny and to hunt for candy-filled eggs. — Photo by Veronica Monier

Government may help buy emergency gear

Norton County could get a little help from the federal government to purchase emergency equipment, such as radios.

Money from the Homeland Security Department has been given to the Kansas Highway Patrol Emergency Management to be given in grants to the counties for equipment.

Norton County is eligible to receive up to \$85,000 in grants for emergency equipment in 12 areas.

Equipment, which could be purchased with this money, include:

1. Personal protective equipment.
2. Explosive devise mitigation.
3. Search and rescue equipment.
4. Communications equipment.
5. Detection equipment.
6. Decontamination equipment.
7. Physical security equipment.
8. Terrorism incident prevention.
9. Logistical support equipment.
10. Incident response vehicles.
11. Medical supplies.
12. Reference material.

The money, which is from a 2003 grant, must be spent by June 30, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Alvin Mapes said.

Mr. Mapes is getting together the information needed to apply for these grants and said he wants to find out what people need.

John Miller suggested bringing in Norton City Administrator Rob Lawson, fire chiefs from all county departments, county Road and Bridge Supervisor Tom Brannan. — Photo by Veronica Monier (Continued on Page 3)

Home, Sweet Home

Houses provide stability

(Continued from Page 1)

Like all the men at Grant House, Dennis, 52, came from Norton State Hospital when it closed.

Dennis is very friendly and outgoing. He loves to help cook.

"Dennis just loves to help. Period," a staff member said.

But it wasn't always so. When Dennis first came to Grant House he experienced violent outbursts three to four times a day. These outbursts required several people to keep him controlled.

Now, Dennis seldom exhibits aberrant behavior.

He might get upset if he gets too much re-direction or if the other men are too loud. But Dennis has learned that when he gets upset he may request permission to go outside, one of his favorite pastimes.

Dennis is able to dress himself and has become a very neat eater.

While some people have no family or anyone to remember them, some have people who visit them regularly.

At 39, Jack is the youngest resident at Grant House and is higher functioning than the others. He was very young when he was placed in state care. The oldest of four children his behavior made it necessary for his family to institutionalize him. They couldn't care for both him and their other children.

That doesn't mean his family forgot about him, though. His mother and father visited him frequently.

Jack anticipated their visits, knowing his mother would always ask him for a hug. But Jack's mother died in January, and though it's difficult to know if he understands the concept of death, he does know that his mother is gone and that he can't see her anymore.

Jack has some verbal skills. He does lots of activities and with prompting is able to complete many tasks. Jack doesn't like to get his hands dirty and always wants to be clean.

The residents at both Grant House and Eisenhower House are oblivious to what the future may bring to them. They don't understand budget cuts and bureaucratic red tape.

All they know is that they are like family. They have been together for 15 years. The other residents and the staff are the consistent things in their lives; and consistency is the one thing they count on.

Change disrupts their routine. Disruptions cause them to be anxious and being anxious causes them to exhibit erratic behavior.

It's taken years for them to achieve the functioning levels they have today. Staff members have dedicated themselves to these people, who measure progress in inches.

If the agency and its services in Norton are discontinued, their fear is that the men and women at Grant and Eisenhower Houses will feel abandoned and that all their hard work will have been in vain.



Debbie (above) acts as the official greeter to visitors at Eisenhower House. She enjoys playing with cards and watching television. Wanda

Schlegel (below) assisted Dennis with cutting his meat. Ms. Schlegel uses a rocker-type cutter so that Dennis can help her.



Budget cuts make future uncertain

Government cuts are forcing many agencies in the state to re-evaluate, restructure and re-access their budgets.

There is a possibility that these cuts may force the closing of Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas, in Norton, an agency that cares for the mentally handicapped.

If the state of Kansas closes down the agency, what will happen to the six men and six women, ages 39 to 61, in Norton, who are under the care of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment?

That is the question looming over the heads not only of the 12 people who need to be cared for, but the 30 plus employees who work for the agency.

Sondra Graham, individual program coordinator at developmental services, said, "All we know is some services will be curtailed or a facility will be closed."

When the Norton State Hospital closed in 1988, the state asked Developmental Services to accept some of the patients.

All of the men living in the Norton home came from the state hospital. The women came from foster care, nursing homes and other state institutions.

When they arrived in Norton, some couldn't feed themselves, some guarded their food for fear it would be taken from them, and most ate their food too fast because they were used to a limited amount of time to eat their meals.

Most can dress themselves now

and those that could not walk when they first came now can, with the aid of a walker.

Ms. Graham said she doesn't know what will happen to their charges if the state closes the Norton facilities. Going back to their families is not an option. Most of their parents are dead or very elderly. Plus, their needs are too severe for most families to care for them.

Because of their handicaps, they have a hard time adjusting to strange situations.

One of the men rocked himself in a rocking chair for a solid week when he first came to the house. Another kept repeating, "Go home. Go home. Go home."

The staff's main concern is that their charges, who are 15 years older now, would be affected the same way, if not worse, if they were forced to move.

Delberta Miller, worries what will happen if the women in her care have to move.

"I can't even imagine how that would affect them," she said.

Goals are broken down into mini-goals. For example, if the goal is to learn how to make a glass of iced tea, the task would be divided into the steps. First, get the glass, next put a spoonful of instant tea in it, pour in the water, stir and add the ice. The same approach is used to teach how to wash their hands or how to put up the flag.

To learn more about Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas call Sondra Graham at 877-5154.



Kenny (above) spends hours assembling pieces of PVC pipe in various configurations. Kenny also likes to play "Connect Four" so he can put the pegs in the holes. Residents and staff (right) of Eisenhower House, the women's facility, take a break to watch television.



Stories and photos by Carolyn Plotts