

# A crowd gathers to celebrate sobriety

As part of its birthday celebrations, Valley Hope held its annual Alkathon. This year's theme was "It All Adds Up".

The 37th Alkathon began with a freedom drive from the Norton facility to the St. Francis Catholic Parish Center.

After a brief welcome that began with "Hi, my name is Steve and I'm and alcoholic," two guest speakers shared their stories.

The first, Don J., Norton, said he was in Al-Anon.

He said he had had second thoughts about speaking at the event and had thought about it every day.

"Drinking was a problem in our family," he said. "It seemed like the natural thing to do. It kept creeping in our lives until Connie (his wife) had a problem."

He said it was hard for him to accept that alcoholism is a disease because he didn't have a problem with not drinking. He said she was a stay-at-home drinker and he became a work-a-holic.

One day, he said he convinced her she needed help; but it didn't work because they didn't change their lives. Then a couple of years later she went to Valley Hope.

He said he took her there, enrolled her and shot out the door.

He thought it wasn't his problem, that she would stay for a time and then would be cured.

"I was having a great time," he said with a smile. "Worked whenever I wanted, ate TV dinners. My problem was at Valley Hope."

He said he didn't want to be involved in her recovery, because he was ashamed they had this problem in the family.

But, he got involved slowly, and finally felt like he was a part of the group. He went to a few Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and then started going more and more to Al-Anon meetings.

"My biggest fear is not that my wife will drink again," he said, "but that I will become complacent in my program."

"I am grateful that I don't have to live my life in chains and fear anymore, and that's because of Al-Anon."

The second speaker, David D., Broken Bow, said that he was an alcoholic.

He said he'd been to treatment but it wasn't until his sixth time that he stuck with it.

"I think it's only by the grace of God that I'm here today," he said. "I didn't do it by myself."

He said he grew up in Broken Bow and didn't drink in high school. He went to college in Hastings and then went to his first keg party where he lost his billfold, glasses and two front teeth.

"I should've know then," he said.

Later, he said, he blew his leg almost off with a rifle.

"The first drink I took, I wanted 10 more," he said. "I went berserk. It seemed like in those days, everybody drank. All that time I never thought drinking was my problem."

He said he started making a lot of money and his bar tabs would be \$500 a week, and that was when beer cost 60 cents.

He did one crazy thing after another, from buying a helicopter and flying it drunk to disappearing for two years, living on the street in a cardboard box part of the time.

He said it took a guy, who was sitting next to him in a bar getting blown away with a .357, to realize he needed help.

"We all have a story," he said. "I think as painful as the story is sometimes, it's a blessing in disguise. I'm a much better person now."

"Sobriety is the greatest gift a person could have. It's a great way to live."

The Golden Heart Award was given to four recipients this year for their dedication to the program, patient groups and alumni groups. Receiving the award were Becky R., Dodge City; Kim S., Garden City; Kevin O., North Platte and Ogallala, Neb.; and Vickie G, Hays.

Cups and one-year medallions were given out. The alumni were recognized and a sobriety countdown was held.

The guests of the Alkathon also listened to a song from Ben Bollig and a short speech from Valley Hope President Dennis Gilhousen.

# 'Hope' holds annual meeting Friday

(Continued from Page 1) 23 1/2 days.

The average daily census in the daily facilities was 402.3 patients per day, he said.

"It's the first time we've have averaged over 400 patient a day," he said. "That's not just a number. It represents real people with real problems that we are helping."

Mr. Gilhousen said the outpatient program has also grown with 1,667 admissions in 2004. Staffing has grown as well as technological capabilities and marketing.

He said this wasn't due to him.

"Throughout my tenure as president, I've been blessed with a leadership team second to none in the country," he said. "I take great pride in what we have done."

"It's never easy to say good-bye to things you love. Since 1971, I have enjoyed a wonderful and wonder-filled season. Everything has its time."

"This place is a piece of the fabric of my life. I know I will be taking a piece of it with me. I hope, also, that I will be leaving a piece of myself behind."



Dennis Gilhousen

President-elect Ken Gregoire said that Valley Hope will need to focus on three things to stay on the brightly lit path of the past two presidents.

He said first, they need to keep focused on the mission. He said Valley Hope loves the alcoholic, the addicted and their families. It's what they do, he said.

Second, he said they need to focus on steady improvement of treatment. He said good treatment is not complex, but is incredibly difficult to deliver on a day-to-day basis.

The final thing, he said, was to keep focused on the plan. It's carried them a long way and they've stuck to it, but it was also time to update.

"I want to walk this path and I want you to walk it with me," Mr. Gregoire said. "No one can do it alone."

Chief Financial Officer Tom Baumann said the association has had an excellent year and that like each of the previous seven years, it was better than the one before.

The financial figures for the 2004 are: total assets — \$35.482 million; total liability — \$5.504 million; total equity — \$30.238 million; total earned income — \$53.579 million; total expenses — \$31.334 million; and uncompensated cares — \$10.755 million.

Mr. Baumann said the association has a net of \$12.693 million and after deducting for the uncom-



Ken Gregoire

pensated cares, has \$1.938 million in revenue.

The board had four members with expired terms — Jeff Wheeler, Colorado Springs; Mike Carr, Oklahoma City; John Cummings, Littleton, Colo.; and Dr. Merlynn Colip, Norton.

All four chose to run for re-election and were unanimously re-elected.

# President puts the reigns into new hands

Valley Hope Association President and Chief Executive Officer Dennis R. Gilhousen announced his retirement during the association's annual meeting here Friday.

Mr. Gilhousen, who started his career with Norton Valley Hope in 1971, will conclude his tenure with the nationally recognized substance abuse treatment program Dec. 31.

Tony Jewell, chairman of the association's board of directors, said the new president will be Senior Vice President of Clinical Services Ken Gregoire, a member of the staff since 1977.

Mr. Gregoire began his career with Valley Hope as assistant program director at the Norton center. He later served as program director at both Norton and Parker Valley Hope in Colorado and has spent the past 12 years as corporate clinical coordinator. He was named vice president in 1992.

"Dennis (Gilhousen) is an icon within the treatment industry," Mr. Jewell said. "He is a renowned leader and spokesperson, but more importantly, he has the admiration and respect of the more than 600 Valley Hope Association employees because of who he is. He will be greatly missed."

Mr. Gilhousen has helped make the association a forerunner in the chemical dependency treatment field. Under his leadership, the association has grown to become one of the largest private, non-profit alcohol and drug addiction treatment programs in the country.

He was first hired in 1971 as the administrator for Norton's Valley Hope, the only Valley Hope treat-

ment center at that time. There are now 26 facilities in seven states and Valley Hope has touched the lives of more than 200,000 individuals and family members, a statistic that made Mr. Gilhousen reflect on his career.

"I have had the great privilege of working most of my adult life with a group of people who are genuinely dedicated to helping people restore lives that have been torn apart by alcoholism and drug addiction," he said. "When my family and I moved back to Norton nearly 34 years ago, I had no idea of what the new job I was taking would become or how my life would be changed by it."

"I have been truly blessed to have been part of what Valley Hope has done, and I am grateful for having the opportunity to be part of it. I know I will miss it, but I am looking forward to the time that lies ahead."

Mr. Gilhousen served as a board member and past chairman for the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers and was active in a national coalition of providers known as the Partnership for Recovery.

He was the recipient of the 2003 Achievement Award from the American College of Addiction Treatment Administrators, for his service to the industry and work at Valley Hope.

In addition, at their 2003 annual convention the Kansas Association of Broadcasters presented him with the Tony Jewell Award "for outstanding contributions to the prevention and treatment of alcohol/drug abuse".

He serves on the Norton County Hospital board of directors and is an ordained Episcopal priest, serving on committees and commissions on both a diocesan and national church level.

Mr. Gilhousen has served on the Consumers Advisory Council of Kansas Blue Cross/Blue Shield; as a board member for High Plains Mental Health Center; as a Norton board of education member; and as a member of a task force of the Kansas Association of School Boards, to help pass legislation on sex education and alcohol and drug prevention programs in Kansas schools.

Mr. Gilhousen and his wife Laura plan to remain in Norton.

The Valley Hope Association operates substance abuse treatment centers in Norton, Atchison, Halstead and Wichita; Boonville, St. Louis and Springfield, Mo.; O'Neill and Lincoln, Neb.; Parker, Westminster, Englewood and Colorado Springs, Colo.; Chandler, Phoenix, Tucson and Tempe, Ariz.; Cushing, Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Okla.; and Grapevine and Garland, Texas.

# Coyotes are set to start volleyball Saturday

The Jennings High School Coyotes will be howling with eight girls, including four seniors, on the volleyball court this season.

Coach Vicki Schmitz said that the team's biggest advantage this year is its senior leadership.

The team has four returning lettermen in seniors Rockie Bochert and Tiffany Wheeler, junior Elise Kinser and sophomore Kim Coiner.

Other members of the team will be seniors Jody Brooks and Crystal Franco and freshmen Ashley Brown and Crystal Boling.

Both Brooks and Franco have experience, Coach Schmitz said.

This is Schmitz's second year to coach volleyball in Jennings. The Coyotes ended their 2003 season 7-20.

The Coyotes biggest disadvantage this year, Coach Schmitz said, is their height.

"You might say we're short," she said, adding that she feels the girls can overcome this problem by doing all the little things right.

The Coyotes start their season Saturday at the Healy Tournament. Their first opponent will be the Golden Plains Bulldogs. This will be the second game of the tournament, and probably will start at 10 a.m., Coach Schmitz said.

The other teams in Jennings' pool will be Sharon Springs and Otis-Bison. Also playing will be Cheylin, Brewster, South Gray and Healy.

Last year, the Coyotes opened their season with a triangular tournament in Alma and then went to the Healy Tournament.

The girls started off by winning the first game of matches against Kensington and Northern Valley, but eventually lost to both the Gold Bugs and the Huskies.

At the Healy meet, the girls lost to the Brewster Bulldogs, beat the Wallace County Wildcats of Sharon Springs and lost to the South Gray Rebels from Montezuma.

The Coyotes lost two players from last year. Sara Kier graduated and one student transferred to another school.

The Coyotes' first home matchup this year will be next Tuesday when the West Plains, Northern Valley and Kensington girls come to town for a quadrangle meet starting at 4 p.m.

# Boys team is small but tough


Three Jennings High School football players have joined the boys from Hoxie to play football this season.

Seniors Kyle Kinser and Tyler Bolt and sophomore Marcus McKenna will be part of the Indians squad as it takes to the field against Goodland at 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 3, in Hoxie.

The Jennings Coyotes were 5-4 last year and came in second to Northern Valley in their district. However, there were seven seniors on the squad last year and after graduation, there weren't enough players left to field a team this year. The Prairie Heights School Board reached a cooperative agreement with Hoxie for the boys to play there.

The three players have been traveling to Hoxie to practice with the Indians. Junior high football and volleyball players are playing on Oberlin teams, but Jennings has enough girls to field a volleyball team.

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