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Pages 6 & 7

Vol. 97, No. 101
75 cents

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

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Come downtown for the Christmas on Us drawing at 1 p.m. Saturday and win.

Friday

December 17, 2004

Norton, Kansas

Home of Howard Schemper

Briefly

Seniors to hold bake sale,

wrapping party

The Norton Senior Citizens will have a bake sale from 1-5 p.m., Monday. They will accept food items from anyone who would like to make something to donate to the Center.

Gift wrapping will also be made available that afternoon. If you need help wrapping your Christmas presents the senior citizens can help. They will furnish the wrapping paper or use yours, whichever you prefer. There is no charge for the gift wrapping, but they will accept donations. All proceeds from the day will go toward purchasing a new sound system.

School concert set for Monday

Eisenhower Elementary School, grades one-six, will present its annual Winter Concert at 6:30 p.m. Monday. The doors will open at 6 p.m. The fifth and sixth-grade bands will play. The public is invited.

Portions of the concert will be broadcast on KBSH Hays TV, Channel 7.

The telecasts will be about three minutes each in broadcasts at 12-12:30 p.m. Monday-Tuesday; 7:55 a.m. Wednesday; noon Thursday; 8:55 a.m. and noon Monday, Dec. 27; 8:26 a.m. Wednesday-Thursday, Dec. 29 and 30; and 8:55 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 31.

Weight room will be closed

The Norton Schools' gyms, weightlifting room and wrestling room will all be closed Wednesday-Sunday, Dec. 22-26, for winter break.

Weather

Forecast:

Tonight — Partly cloudy with lows in the upper 20s. **Saturday** — Partly cloudy with highs in the lower 50s. Northwest winds 10 to 20 mph. **Saturday Night** — Partly cloudy with lows around 20. Northwest winds 5 to 15 mph.

Howell report:

Tuesday High 45, Low 20
Wednesday High 50, Low 32
Thursday High 51, Low 27
Month ago High 58, Low 44
Year ago High 57, Low 29
December precipitation 0.00 inches
Year-to-date precipitation ... 25.75 inches
(Readings taken at the Paul and Pat Howell farm 10 Miles North and 1/3 Mile East of Norton)

Prayer

God, transform us so that we reflect your love in all that we say and do.
Amen



Youngsters serenade their elders

Kindergartners from Mrs. Hillman's class presented a program to residents of the Andbe Home Thursday. They sang songs, fidgeted and gave handmade Christmas cards to some of the residents.

— Telegram photos by Carolyn Plotts



Christmas is coming and so are increased demands on the supply of staples at God's Pantry, housed at Norton's Trinity Episcopal Church. Volunteer Elaine Mann loaded donated groceries left at *The Telegram* office. She said the pantry always needs sugar, powdered milk, cooking oil and canned meats. She said it really helped to have drop-off points like *The Telegram* and Twice-Sold Treasurers.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

Hospital feels fine, business up

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County Hospital is doing well this year.

Administrator Rich Miller said the hospital has seen a big jump in acute care and skilled services.

The hospital's fiscal year began July 1. From then to Oct. 31, he said, the hospital has had 1,442 patient days, compared to 1,181 during the same period last year and 986 the year before.

Admissions totaled 182 by Oct. 31, while last year there were 145 and 164 the year before. Surgical procedures have stayed steady at 99 this year, 93 last year and 106 the year before.

Mr. Miller said with 17 births so far, he expects the hospital to be where they were two years ago by the end of the year. Two years ago they had 22 births, while last year only three babies were born here.

Outpatient procedures are up to 30,264 so far this year, compared to 25,064 last year and 25,072 the year before.

Mr. Miller said procedures include radiology; echocardiograms; CAT scans; laboratory, respiratory and physical therapy, emergency room visits, cardiac rehab, speech and occupational therapy; and MRI scans, which is part of a mobile service.

He said the hospital is one of the few rural hospitals that has in-house ultrasound available.

"Overall, our volume of business is pretty consistent," he said.

Financially, he said the hospital is over its budgeted \$2.75 million in patient revenue at \$2.9 million.

It is also under the budgeted \$621,000 in contractual adjustments at \$565,000. Contractual adjustments are services used, but those that insurance companies won't pay for and the hospital can't bill the patient for, and so is obligated to write off.

Mr. Miller said the hospital has had \$2.3 million in expenses, which is slightly over the budgeted \$2.2 million. He said expenses are higher because of the increased patient volume. As revenue goes up, expenses go up as well.

He said there was \$68,000 in other revenue.
(Continued on Page 5)

Most Norton churches to celebrate this Sunday

With Christmas Day falling on a Saturday this year, many area churches are opting to have their Christmas programs on Sunday.

Prairie View Reformed and Luctor Christian Church will be having a joint children's Christmas program at 7 p.m. Sunday at Prairie View.

Norton Christian will have its children's Christmas program at 7 p.m. Sunday as will Immanuel Lutheran.

Living Hope Fellowship is planning its Christmas service Sunday at 7 p.m.

Other churches will have Christmas Eve services.

Edmond United Methodist will have Christmas Eve services at 5 p.m. Friday while Norton First United Methodist Church's will be at 7 p.m.

St. Joseph Catholic Church of New Almelo will have Christmas Eve Mass at 6 p.m. while St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Norton, will have two Christmas Eve Masses at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. St. Francis will also have Christmas Day Mass at 9 a.m.

Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church will have a children's Christmas Eve service at 6:30 p.m.

Norton Christian Church is planning a 6:30 p.m. candlelight service on Christmas Eve.

Immanuel Lutheran Church will begin its Christmas Eve service at 6:45 p.m. with a pre-service carol singing; the Christmas Cantata starts at 7 p.m. and an 11 p.m. candlelight service will end the evening.

Time to dig deep, pay taxes

'Tis the season — and not just for presents and holiday cheer either as Monday is the last day to pay the first half of property and real estate taxes.

Norton County Treasurer Cindy Linner said property owners have until 5 p.m. Monday to pay their property taxes without facing penalties.

If it is personal or intangible property, oil royalties or 16/20M trucks, then once Monday passes, unpaid taxes will have to be due in full.

Also unpaid taxes on all property will accumulate interest at an annual rate of 7 percent.

Mrs. Linner said when paying taxes, the treasurer's office asks that people bring their payment stubs with them. She said it's a big help, but they can look it up by the owners name if the stub is misplaced or the owner lives out of town and forgot to bring it with them.

"Everything goes a lot quicker if people bring the payment stubs," she said.

The date to pay the second half of property taxes has been moved up to May 10.

Mrs. Linner said Gov. Kathleen Sebelius moved the date up by 40 days to help with the state's budget crunch last year and now the date is here to stay.

passes state tests

Women, who have suffered domestic violence or sexual assault and are needing a safe place to stay for themselves and their children, will be glad to know that the Northwest Kansas Family Shelter has met the accreditation standards and has a staff that is fully trained.

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence announced last week that the family shelter has also fulfilled all the confidentiality policies needed to serve victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The accreditation process must be completed every three years and is a prerequisite for receiving money from the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, which is federal money administered by the governor.

Because the shelter is a safe haven for those who have been the victims of domestic violence, its location is kept quiet.

If a person needs to contact the shelter, call (785) 232-9894 or dial 911.



Members of Leadership Norton toured health facilities in Norton County during their class last week. The group toured Norton County Hospital, visited Norton County Health Department, learned about Hospice services, toured High Plains Mental Health and visited the Andbe Home. Members of the class lined the seats of the reinforced storm shelter at Whispering Pines Retirement and Assisted Center as the center's director, Cynthia Collins, standing, explained readiness and emergency procedures.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

Schools to buy laptops with refund cash

By VERONICA MONIER
The Norton schools will be buying laptop computers and software with the district's refund from Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

At Monday's school board meeting, Superintendent Greg Mann recommended that the money be used to buy equipment and software that was planned for last spring, but put off.

He said the district's part of the refund was \$87,556; the rest was given to the teachers who are part of the district's insurance group.

"I think if we get this software, we have to have the computers available to use it," he said. "There is going to be more and more assessment testing and, by doing the testing online, we get more immediate feedback.

"Also, the laptops can be used if we need to have alternate educational placement for a problem student. Even if they can't learn in a regular classroom, we are still obligated to teach them.

"I think as we use these computers more, we'll find more and more uses for them."

Mr. Mann recommended that the board buy 50 laptops for \$749 each and two wireless mobile computer carts for \$1,500, which would come to \$40,450.

He also suggested a three-year agreement for Pass Key software which would cost \$52,250 using the refund money and Lenora contract money. About \$47,106 of that would come from the refund and the other \$5,144 from the contract.

The Lenora money could also be used to purchase 25 more laptops and an additional wireless mobile computer cart for \$20,525.

Board Member Jeff Nielsen said he didn't want to use the money for computers.

"I'm not for this," he said. "I feel like this money should go to the teachers. To take and put it back

Four board seats up for election

Several positions on the Norton School Board will be up for election this spring.

Up for election for four-year terms are:

- Position No. 4, held by Anna Foley and representing those in Norton City Ward Three and those outside of the city limits, but within the school district boundaries.

- Position No. 5, held by Pam Shelton and representing Norton City wards one and two.

- Position No. 6, held by Elaine Lofgreen and represent-

ing those in Norton City Ward Three and those outside of the city limits.

Up for election for a two-year term is:

- Position No. 2, held by Gary Lacy, representing those in Norton City Wards One and Two. Mr. Lacy was appointed to replace Board member Darin Schuckman, who moved to Larned earlier this year. The two-year term in the election is what remains of Mr. Schuckman's four-year term.

The filing deadline is noon on

Tuesday, Jan. 25. To run for a position, a person must be 18-years-old and live in the area he or she wants to represent.

The general election will be held on Tuesday, April 5, and, if needed, a primary election will be held on Tuesday, March 1. It will be an open district election so all of the candidates will be on the ballot.

For more information, contact Janice Russell, clerk of the board, at 877-3386, or Robert Wyatt, county election officer, at 877-5710.

into operations when we didn't do anything to earn it... I would like to give it back to the participants."

Board Member Elaine Lofgreen said it was a difficult decision to make. She said before she was wavering between giving it to the teachers or using it for something else, but in the end, decided to use it for something else.

"We all know how I've stood on this in the past," she said. "For the last couple of years I've voted to give it to the teachers. But after thinking about it seriously, I decided I had to stop looking at the situation personally, but as a school board member.

"That's why I changed my mind. We did what we said we were going to do by paying part of their insurance. Also, I haven't heard any comments about it one way or another from anyone who is a member of the group.

"I had to look at it from a business standpoint."

Board Member Jennifer Terrell said the board's interests had to be for the students and supporting their education. She said it would be a great moral booster for the

teachers, but that they had to make the students their No. 1 priority.

She said as for the money going back into operational costs, the board could have used the money for operations in the first place, but chose to use it for insurance.

"Our teachers are wonderful," she said. "But I think it will benefit the kids more than the teachers. It would be nice to give it back, but it won't bring in new teachers or improve the standard of excellence we already have in our teachers."

Mr. Nielsen said if he's asked about this, he would rather say the board put it back into the teachers instead of buying computers and software when the mobile labs the district has aren't used enough.

Board Member Gary Lacy said Mr. Mann probably researched the issue quite a bit and knows what the district needs.

Mr. Mann said the testing would probably be done completely online in three to five years. But, he said, the computers wouldn't just be used for assessment, but also for other things like teaching problem students.

Development group gets new director

Jerry Michaud, director of quality improvements for Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas, has been tapped to replace Jim Blume as president of the organization, beginning in July.

Mr. Michaud has been with the organization for 13 years.

Mr. Blume has served the agency for 30 years.

He and his wife, Rose, will be moving to Denver, where he will work with the poor.

Mr. Michaud and Mr. Blume are working together now to ensure a smooth transition.

"I know Jerry will do a tremendous job after I am gone," Mr. Blume said. "He has valuable experience, is a strong leader and is well respected."

Mr. Michaud will have several major job responsibilities which

include: overseeing a network of services for about 500 developmentally disabled adults and children; managing a \$15.5 million budget; and directing the work of more than 500 employees. He will also oversee policy direction, organizational systems, resource development and continuous quality improvement.



J. Michaud

"We have a long-standing history in Norton," Mr. Michaud said. "The employees there are very committed and we have strong community support, too. We want to maintain the services we have there. I know we can work, positively, with the legislature to maintain services and the funding that needed to continue our work."

Mr. Michaud is originally from Englewood, Colo. He and his wife, Renee, have two children.

Hospital takes pulse, finds it's doing well

(Continued from Page 1) enue, \$25,000 of which came from taxes and the rest coming from interest and contributions.

He said the hospital also received a disproportionate share payment of \$1.1 million.

The hospital got the share payment because it met the criteria such as having low-risk obstetrics services and some uninsured population.

Overall, the hospital is \$1.24 million in the black.

Last year the hospital had a net income of \$86,000 and the year before it was \$215,000.

Mr. Miller said the share payment had a lot to do with the big increase in income.

He said the volume of business is up, but probably is only offsetting the increased cost of providing services.

Also, he said, the hospital is converting to a new computer system — Dairyland.

As the staff learns the new system, more bills are sent out.

Billing lagged a little while people were being trained and so accounts receivable is now probably higher than it normally would be. He said it will probably level off sometime in the near future.

"We really appreciate our patients' understanding and patience while we learn the new system," he said. "They've been working well with us, giving us more time to get the bill-

ing out."

He said the conversion to the new system is going well.

They have all of the financials converted and the clinical system, which is new to the hospital, is getting finished.

The new system is great, he said. Now the Doctor's Clinic can order tests and get the results back more efficiently. If the test results aren't within normal limits, then the system will post an alert with it so the doctor will see it faster.

The new computer system makes billing a lot easier, he said, completely taking away the need to hand bill. He said they are hoping that it will make insurance claims faster as well.


Throughout the past year, the hospital has seen a lot of changes. Not only has it gotten a new computer system, but the two-year long renovation project that cost over \$4 million was finished in April as well. Mr. Miller said the hospital is really benefiting from the planning that went into the project.

He said they also finished an exterior landscaping project this fall and have added new equipment over the past two years. He said the hospital has gotten a new X-ray diagnostic imaging unit, new ultrasound and lab equipment, a new monitoring system and a new emergency contact system.




Kyle Douglas, a senior at Norton Community High School and a member of Teens For Christ, inspected a boat that was one of the first vehicles donated to help establish a non-profit Christian youth center called "The Rock", in Norton. Steve Mathes, donated the 1971 EbKraft motor boat to the center and took advantage of existing laws that will allow him a tax write-off. An auction of the donated vehicles will be held in the spring.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts



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