

Hospital employees insurance cost to stay the same

By VERONICA MONIER

While most health insurance plans in the county have increased in price or decreased in benefits, Norton County Hospital employees will pay the same amount and receive the same benefits.

Hospital Administrator Rich Miller said the hospital has a partially self-funded plan with Blue Cross Blue Shield. The new term starts on Feb. 1.

He said they had a good year for employee's health insurance. Use has been under control, he said, and there is a positive balance in the health insurance account.

Mr. Miller said he thinks the insurance benefit cost to be around \$219,000 for the 2005 fiscal year.

He said the board could lower employee premiums or leave it the same and prepare for future premium increases.

Board president Kathy Holste said if the board dropped the premium this year it might be a problem if it has to be raised next year.

Board member Dennis Gilhousen agreed.

He said, for example, if they lowered it \$20 this year, but then had to raise it \$40 the next year, the employees wouldn't be happy. But, if they left it the same this year and only had to raise it \$20 next year, it would be much better.

"If things still look good next year, then we might lower it," he said. "But, I think we should leave it alone for now."

Mr. Miller said in the future if premiums went sky high, then the board might look into getting involved with the state insurance plan.

But at the moment, he said, it wasn't something the board needed to worry about.

In other business, the board:

- Were introduced to new members Steve Berry of Lenora and Warren White of Norton. Both have four-year terms.

- Gave recognition plaques to retiring members Weldon Brooks and Greg Graham for their service. Mr. Brooks was on the board for four years and Mr. Graham, seven years.

- Elected Mr. Gilhousen as the board treasurer after he resigned as

board secretary. Jenny Goldsby was elected as board secretary.

- Held a 20-minute closed session to discuss non-elected personnel.

- Reviewed the security portion of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) with Corporate Compliance and Privacy Officer Janet Jilka.

The security portion is the third part of the federal law. The other two parts — privacy and administrative simplification — have already been done by the hospital. The security portion goes into effect in April.

- Approved the Health Information Management policy and procedure manual with no changes.

- Heard the statistical report for December. Chief Financial Officer Brian Carlton said the hospital has had 353 patient days with a year-to-date total of 2,229; two babies for a total of 23; 50 admissions for a yearly total of 800; 31 surgeries for a total of 150; 3,377 outpatient days for a total of 41,149; and 1,243 Doctor's Clinic visits for a yearly total of 7,381.

- Went over the patient survey reports. Mr. Miller said the hospital has been getting comments that some patient rooms are too hot or too cold. He said the staff was working on the problem.

- Learned that in April, the hospital will be participating in a statewide patient satisfaction survey, which will compare it to other hospitals.

- Bought a monitoring system for the emergency room based on the approval of a grant. Mr. Miller said the hospital should be getting a \$22,000 bio-terrorism grant, but didn't know if it would be able to use the grant to buy the monitoring equipment.

- Heard from Mr. Carlton that the hospital hasn't had any major issues with the new Dairyland computer information system since Thanksgiving.

There has been some retraining so that everyone knows what to do, he said, and the Doctor's Clinic is running slower than it should, but the problem should be fixed after Nex-tech replaces a switch.



This year's Norton Pinewood Derby was a hit as 20 cub scouts from the county showed up to race their cars. Ed Witt (above) set up the first race. The cub scouts (below) cheered the cars on as they whizzed by on their way to the finish line.

— Telegram photos by Veronica Monier



Cubs' cars race to the finish line

How fast can a block of wood on wheels go?

That's what 20 Norton Cub Scouts found out at the annual Pinewood Derby this Saturday at Eisenhower Elementary. Each cub made a car out of a block of wood, designing and weighting them to get the maximum effect, and then watched the cars go as they were raced on a track, built by Ed Witt.

John Risewick's racer won the race, with Brett Pulec's coming in a close second. Trenton Sprague's car took third.

Kurt Douglas received the slow-poke award and Leif Carlson got best of show for his A-1 Steak-sauce car.

All of the participating scouts received a trophy. Also participating in the event were Nicholas Koch, Colton Moots, Gab Nelson, Christopher Chambers, Philip

Boutwell, Luke Keilig, Weston Erbert, Zachery Nelson, Dylan Spradlin, Cole Renner, Chris Richards, Adam Baughman, John Renner, Michael Fawcett and Braden Carlton.

After the awards were given out, past car builders had a chance to see how well their cars still did in the racing circuit.

The derby is sponsored by the Norton Lion's Club, whose members ran the races and did the judging. Helping out this year were Tom Brannan, Ed Witt, Bill Belt and Shirley Erbert.

Alvin Mapes helped judge.

The next big event for the cubs will be the annual Blue and Gold Banquet at 5:30 p.m. Sunday at the Norton Christian Church. Three of the cubs will be getting their Arrows of Light, which will move them up to Boy Scouts.

Conservation district holds meeting

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County Conservation District held its 59th annual meeting Saturday at the Norton American Legion.

Receiving the 2004 Conservation Award were Bill and Gail Brooks and Bart and Cheri Brooks of Brooks Farm and Duane and June Wray.

Alfred Mindrup was recognized for his work on a living snow fence near New Almelo, while Chancey Marsh and Lemeul Marsh were given the Wildlife Award.

Teresa Schulze was given the Norton County Teacher Award for promoting conservation with her students.

"She does more than she has to and we appreciate that," said Chairman Ed Keith.

The annual report was given by Vice-Chairman Chris Harting, who said the district received \$9,000 from the county and \$9,000 from the state for wages and operations.

He said the state also gave \$2,655 to pay for administration and education of the non-point source pollution plan.

Through the district water resource program, Norton County was allocated \$27,563, which was channeled out as cost share to landowners.

An additional \$6,541 was received for irrigation and the district's non-point money totaled

\$17,771.

Cost sharing programs included terraces, diversions, livestock wells, livestock pipelines, range seedling, pitponds and feedlot and field windbreaks. Water conservation practices in existing irrigation systems were also included in cost sharing.

The conservation district in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service had \$324,127 in Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts.

Donna Hale gave the treasurer's report. She said at the end of the year the balance forward was \$4,826; with receipts of: county allotment, \$9,000; state allotment, \$11,655; interest, \$18; and transfer from enterprise, \$7,000; for a total of \$27,673; and disbursements were: wages and withholding, \$20,344; workers compensation and health insurance, \$3,066; dues and fees, \$500; grant expenditures, \$3,750; miscellaneous, \$2,236; and sales tax, \$5; for a total of \$29,900; and a balance of \$2,599.

In the enterprise fund, the balance forward was \$6,758; with receipts of: sale of merchandise, including grass seed, trees, weed barrier and flags, \$25,343; annual meeting, \$1,782; and miscellaneous, \$675; for a total of \$27,800; and expenditures were: merchandise, \$15,772; contract labor, \$1,934; annual meeting, \$2,643;

supervisor expenses, \$1,462; transfers, \$7,000; office expense, \$1,194; miscellaneous, \$641; and dues and fees, \$503; for total of \$31,149; and a fund balance of \$3,409 with savings at \$84,864 for a total balance of \$90,872.71.

Plaques were given out to the county's poster contest, limerick contest and essay contest winners. Zoey Meyers received an honorable mention at the state contest for her essay.

The county winners were: poster — first and second grade: Kayla Coffey, first; Wyatt Harting, second; and Kortney Cunningham, third; third and fourth grade: Joseph Schaefer, first; Julia Kent, second; and Lane Vanover, third; fifth and sixth grade: Brett Pulec, first; Seth Antrim, second; and Michael Courtain, third; limerick — Katie Gross, first; Sophie Mills, second; and David Puent, third; essay — Dakota Dreher, first; Kaid McKenna, second; and Katie Gross, third.

Nominees for the open supervisor positions were Mr. Harting, Robert Clydesdale and Michael David. Mr. Harting and Mr. Clydesdale were both re-elected to three-year terms.

Jail fight damages clothing

A fight at the Norton County Jail left a prisoner with a cut scalp and an officer with a ruined set of clothing.

While the Norton County Sheriff's Department was booking Roy Gilbert on a warrant from Anderson County on Dec. 27, he became violent and assaulted Deputy Greg VanDiest, said Norton County Sheriff Troy Thomson. When Deputy VanDiest tried to subdue him, Mr. Gilbert cut his head.

The Norton County Emergency Medical Service was called. Sheriff Thomson said when he got to the jail, Mr. Gilbert was trying to assault Acting Ambulance Director Andy Nielsen.

Sheriff Thomson said he got Mr. Gilbert under control, and in the process got blood all over his clothing, which was ruined.

Loan applications due by Monday for wool

Wool and mohair producers can apply for nonrecourse marketing assistance loans and loan deficiency payments at the Norton County Farm Service Agency, but must do so before Monday.

"Producers have until Jan. 31 of the year following the year in which the wool or mohair was sheared to apply for a nine-month marketing assistance loan or loan deficiency payment," said Vesta Hobbs, director of the Norton County office.

She added that this deadline also applies to loan deficiency payments for pelts from unshorn lambs slaughtered in 2004.

When filing an application, ranchers must have a good estimate of the pounds they want to certify.

Mrs. Hobbs said the wool or

mohair must be produced and shorn for live, domestic animals in the U.S. and be of saleable quality. She said ranchers can forego putting their wool and mohair under loan and receive a loan deficiency payment instead.

"Producers must have owned the sheep or goats for at least 30 days before shearing, and they must retain beneficial interest from the time of shearing through either repayment of the loan, or in the case of a loan deficiency payments, the date the payment is requested," she said. "Also for unshorn pelts, the producer must sell the unshorn lamb for immediate slaughter or slaughter the unshorn lamb for personal use."

Contact the Norton County Farm Service Agency office in Norton for more information.

Satisfaction is ... covered with Blue



Kelly Foltz
Group Enrollment Rep
Salina - 785.827.7161



Charles Krull
Group Consultant
Hays - 785.628.2863

- Call your dedicated insurance representative today for:
- a **broad portfolio** of benefit plan options,
 - access to the **most extensive** provider networks available,
 - prompt, accurate, **award-winning service**,
 - valuable tips on how to **lower your health care costs**.

Call 785.628.2863
718 Main, Suite 205 • Hays KS 67601



Atkins Sale
Shed the Pounds

All Atkins Lo Carb Food Products

20% Off
◆ Shakes ◆ Bars
◆ Mixes ◆ Pasta

PURE PRAIRIE NATURAL FOODS

108 E. Washington • Norton, KS
PH (785) 877-3610
ORDERS-1-800-545-7232

FOR SALE

- South of Logan — 80 Acres of Farm Ground
- Two Bedroom, One Bath Home in Logan. Needs TLC
- 320 Acres of Grass and Farmland — North Edge of Graham County
- 160 Acres of Farm Ground — North Edge of Graham County
- Close to Logan on Cactus Creek — 200 Acres with House and Outbuildings. Lots of Wildlife!

CONTACT: LARRY RIGGS
WITH THE GORDON COMPANY
785-689-4845



What you want - When you need it.®
www.bcbsks.com

*Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association
®Registered mark of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association
N 0901-000