

Hospital has more patients than last year

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County Hospital is getting its preliminary budget together for next year.

Hospital Administrator Rich Miller handed out a draft copy of the budget at Tuesday's board meeting. However, he said, more work needed to be done before the June meeting.

He said this year, the hospital had an increase in patient services.

He said he didn't know if it would keep increasing, so they used the same statistics as the previous year, rather than increasing them.

They did, he said, increase the Doctor's Clinic, because it didn't see as large an increase as the rest of the hospital.

He said with Kay Garman, the new nurse practitioner, at the clinic now, it will probably start picking up again.

Mr. Miller said the hospital is applying for another disproportionate share payment, which it has received the past two years because it met the criteria set by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. Some of the criteria are having low-risk obstetrics services and some uninsured patients.

He said last year, the hospital budgeted to receive 4 mills from the county, but the commission didn't approve the increase and gave the hospital 2 mills. He said they were leaving the estimated levy at 4 mills, at least in the preliminary budget.

Mr. Miller said somehow, the hospital needs to find a way to increase its bottom line. He said the preliminary budget has a patient revenue income of about \$8 million and other income of around \$100,000.

Salaries, he said, are a big part of the hospital's expense at \$3.5 million, although the amount isn't much higher than last year. The total expenses in the preliminary budget is \$7.1 million, he said.

In other business, the board:

- Added child care sick leave to the hospital's sick leave policy.

Mr. Miller said over the years, he has had several requests from the employees to use some of their sick leave to take care of a sick child. He said this will allow employees to use 32 hours of their own sick leave to take care of a sick child, spouse, or parent. He said he thought it was a good extension of the hospital's policy.

- Went into a 30-minute closed session to discuss non-elected personnel.

- Learned from Chief Financial Officer Brian Carlton that in April the hospital had 104 acute patient days, 40 skilled patient days, and 140 intermediate days; three births for 36 babies this year; one inpatient and 15 outpatient surgeries for 247 surgeries for the year; 3,310 outpatient procedures for a yearly total of 53,941; and 1,219 Doctor's Clinic visits for a year total of 12,617.



Youngsters gather for Bible class

Youngsters sang during the closing program of the Norton Christian Church Vacation Bible school last week. Youth minister Cody Shepherd took a pie in the face from fifth graders to celebrate that class donating the most money during the week.

—Photos by Carolyn Plotts



Mental health group gives annual report

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

The Norton County commissioners got a short lesson in mental health care earlier in the month when they were visited by representatives of High Plains Mental Health.

High Plains Executive Director Walter Hill, Manager Karen Beery and Licensed Psychologist Dan Sturgill gave the mental health center's annual report on Norton County.

Mr. Hill said his group is not asking for more money.

"We're not asking counties for increases on what they've been contributing to High Plains," he said. "Except two counties (Ellis and Trego), which drastically cut

money to the program. All the rest should remain the same."

Commissioners Leroy Lang and John Miller said the county will try to keep the amount it provides mental health the same, although there is no way to promise.

Norton County paid a little less last year, they said, because the county valuation was down, not because mental health was cut.

The county gave High Plains \$29,000 last year and received \$315,000 in benefits, Mr. Hill said.

About one-half of all money for mental health is paid by the patients, their insurance or Medicaid, he said. The rest of the High Plains' \$8.3 million budget is from grants, state aid and county payments.

Mr. Hill said that High Plains served 260 people in Norton County last year and 259 in 2003.

Of those served, he said, 38 percent were 19 or under, 56 percent were from 20 to 59 and the rest were 60 and over. Of those 74, percent had family incomes of \$25,000 or less.

Mood disorders, especially depression, was the No. 1 problem accounting for 114 patients in Norton County.

High Plains has no trouble working with people in Norton County, Mr. Hill said.

Mr. Sturgill said that his staff works well with the sheriff's department and gets lots of help from all county agencies.

Mr. Hill said they appreciate Rich Miller's service on the board and that he does a good job and has a lot of expertise. Mr. Miller is the Norton County Hospital administrator as well as a High Plains board member.

Libraries begin summer read programs

The theme of the summer reading program at Norton Public Library is "Dragons, Dreams and Daring Deeds".

The program is open to young people of all ages with programs, prizes and story times.

Registration begins Tuesday with three age groups.

Preschool children, babies through kindergarten, are in the "Read-To-Me" group. Parents, grandparents or care providers

will read 20 books throughout the summer to the children.

Elementary, first-fifth grades will read 20 books in their level.

Youth, sixth-12th grade will read 10 books that are at least 130 pages long.

Participants who meet the reading goals will receive a prize and will be eligible to win a bicycle.

Story times are 10:30 a.m. for preschool-first graders and at 2 p.m. for second-sixth graders.

Seventh-12th graders will have Fun Night from 7 to 9 p.m. every Thursday at the Library. There will be food, prizes and fun.

Libraries in Almena, Norcat and Long Island also participate in the summer reading program.

The program is promoted and supported by the Norton Public Library, the Norton Friends of the Library, Northwest Kansas Library System, Midwest Energy and the Almena Naphtali Lodge.

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Community Calendar

<p>Tuesday FFA State Convention in Manhattan. Rose McFarland's Basketball Camp, May 31-June 3. Norton Women's 12-step meeting, 5:30 p.m., VFW. Norton Alcoholics Anonymous, 8:30 p.m., VFW.</p> <p>Wednesday Representatives from Sen. Sam Brownback's office at Norton City Hall, 2 p.m. Discussion on how to help community. Men's night golf, Prairie Dog Golf Course. Norton Al-Anon, 7 p.m., VFW. Duplicate Bridge, 7:30 p.m., Norton Manor.</p> <p>Thursday Environmental Day at Sappa Park, Oberlin, 9:15 - 11:45 a.m. and 1:10 - 2:50 p.m. Sponsored by Linking Girls to the Land in Northwest Kansas. Girls in first-third grades are invited. Call (785) 460-6006 for information. Program at Norton Recreation gym, 10:30 a.m., "Sparrow — The Renaissance Jester". Beth Byrd, Olathe, performing in mime and clowning. Congressman Jerry Moran at First State Bank, 12:30 p.m. On mezzanine level. Almena summer reading program, 2-3:30 p.m., library. Ladies Golf, 6 p.m., Prairie Dog Golf Course. Norton Narcotics Anonymous, 8:30 p.m., VFW.</p> <p>Friday Norcat Senior Citizens, 7 p.m., Educational Building. Norton Alcoholics Anonymous, 8:30 p.m., VFW.</p> <p>Saturday Aluminum can collection at Norton Rural Fire Station. Open House and ribbon cutting for the Norton Rotary BB Gun Museum 1 p.m., 412 E. Holme. Norton Alcoholics Anonymous, 1 p.m., VFW.</p>	<p>Elmwood Park Speedway Races, 7 p.m. Norton Narcotics Anonymous, 8:30 p.m., VFW.</p> <p>Sunday Meals on Wheels volunteers, June 6-12, Immanuel Lutheran Church. Nebraska Cornhusker Motocross Association Races, 11 a.m., south of Norton. 4-H Spring Fashion Review, 2 p.m., Andbe Home. God's Pantry, 3 p.m., Norton Trinity Episcopal Church. Disc Golf, 3 p.m., Elmwood Park. Overeaters Anonymous, 4 p.m., VFW. Good Hope Boosters 4-H Club, 7 p.m., United Parish of Lenora.</p> <p>Monday One-day Vacation Bible School, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Norcat United Methodist Church. No Charge. Lunch and snacks provided. Call 669-2236. Vacation Bible School, June 6-10, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Free lunch. Norton Church of God. Norton Rotary, noon, Town and Country. Norton Alcoholics Anonymous, 6:30 p.m., VFW. Norton Rec Commission, 7 p.m., school district board room. Busy Beavers 4-H Club, 7 p.m., 4-H Building. Norton County Genealogical Society, 7 p.m., Norton Library. Take Off Pounds Sensibly, 7 p.m., hospital basement. Pool Tournament, 7 p.m., Cardinal Bar and Grill, Norcat. Norton Narcotics Anonymous, 8 p.m., VFW.</p> <p>Tuesday, June 7 Norton Lions Club, noon, American Legion. Norton Library Board, 5:15 p.m., Community Room. Women's 12-Step meeting, 5:30 p.m., VFW. Norton Narcotics Anonymous, 8:30 p.m., VFW.</p>
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