

# Refund will go to employees

By VERONICA MONIER

School employees won't have any out-of-pocket expense for insurance for the rest of the fiscal year.

The Norton School Board decided Monday that that was what it was going to do with its share of a refund from Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Superintendent Greg Mann said the total refund was \$102,256, \$39,349 of which goes back to the group members as is set up in their contract. That leaves \$62,907 for the board to decide what to do with, he said.

The board, he said, had three options. It could:

- Retain 100 percent of its portion of the refund and put the money in a special fund, like capital outlay for later use;
- Retain part of its portion and then refund the rest to the employees; or
- Refund 100 percent of the \$62,907 to the staff.

Employees could be last year's group members, this year's group members, all of this year's workers or all of last year's workers including full and part-time employees and supplemental workers like coaches and such.

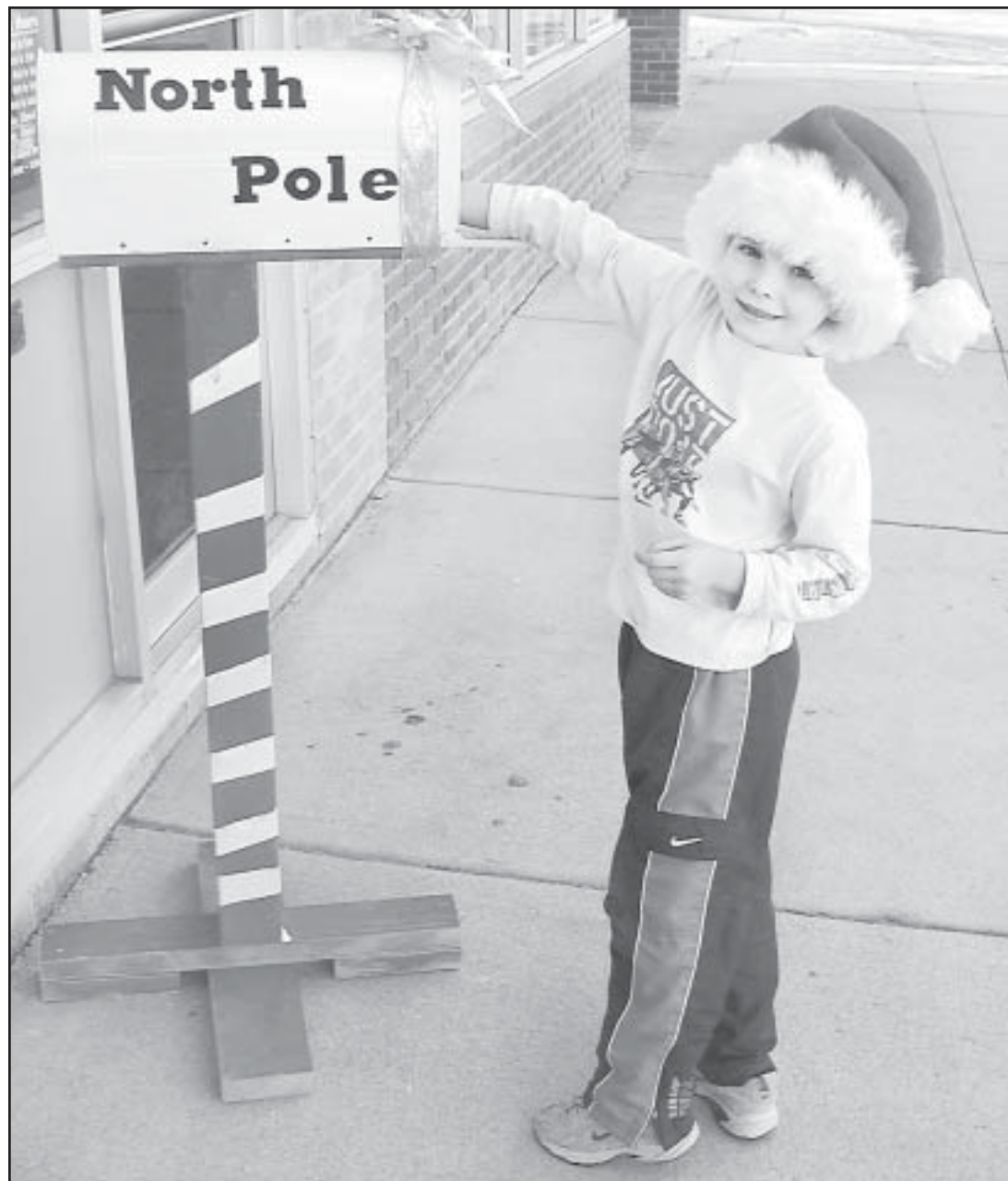
Where do you stop, he asked. Do some employees get more of a refund or bonus than others because they paid more or work more or have bigger salaries, or does everybody get the same amount?

"There are a lot of layers to this problem," he said. "Nothing about this is going to be fair. Regardless of what you do, not everybody is going to be happy. There is no way it can be fair to everyone."

There is also a problem with doing a rate holiday for the group members, Mr. Mann said, because it won't come out even and the board will still have to determine what to do with that small amount of extra money.

He said the board could create a special fund and put all of the money into it, including that saved from having a rate holiday, and give a rate holiday to all of the group until the money is gone. But, he said, if there is any money left

## Sending out a special request



Boys and girls who want to send Santa a letter can just slip it into the Christmas bedecked mailbox in front of the Norton Area Chamber Office. Weston Erbert did just that Monday afternoon once the mailbox was set up. The mailbox will be there during Chamber hours until Christmas. Of course, Santa still accepts letters mailed at the Norton Post Office.

— Telegram photo by Veronica Monier

at the end of the fiscal year, then it has to be spent or transferred into another special fund like capital outlay.

If the money is used for a rate holiday fund, he said the employees wouldn't have to pay their premiums from January to June.

Board member Elaine Lofgreen said the problem with that is people pay different out-of-pocket amounts for different plans; some don't pay anything.

"People who don't pay don't get any benefit, while those who have a family plan get all of the benefit," she said. "It's totally uneven."

Board member Craig Renner

said it was easier to swallow if no one has to pay.

Another idea, said Board member Jeff Nielsen, is to give every employee a one-time bonus that is 1.77 percent of their yearly salary. This way, he said, everyone benefits.

Mr. Nielsen made the motion to do so. It failed 2-5 with himself and Board member Mark Keilig voting yes, and Mr. Renner, Mrs. Lofgreen and board members Jennifer Terrell, Scott Ellis and Chris Harting voting no.

Mr. Renner made the motion to set up a special fund so that there will be no out-of-pocket expense

until the end of the fiscal year.

Mrs. Lofgreen said there was still the vast inequality between those employees who benefited and those who didn't.

Mr. Renner said at least it would keep the money where it was budgeted.

Mr. Mann asked if Mr. Renner wanted to include retirees in the motion.

Mr. Renner amended his motion to current employees.

The motion passed 4-3 with Mr. Renner, Mrs. Terrell, Mr. Nielsen and Mr. Keilig voting yes and Mrs. Lofgreen, Mr. Harting and Mr. Ellis voting no.

# Women win \$50 each in instant prizes

The final four instant winners claimed their \$50 prizes after finding their ticket numbers last week in the Norton merchants' Christmas On Us contest.

Karen VanSkiike, Norton, was the first to spot her ticket number in the third week of the promotion.

Mrs. VanSkiike, who picked up her ticket at First State Bank, spotted ticket No. 2409671 in the Kellie's ad. She said her boys will help her decide what to do with the money. Probably, she said, she'll spend it on Christmas gifts.

Frances Cochran, Norton, was the second to claim her winnings, finding ticket No. 006272 in the ad for Norton Shop and Save. Mrs. Cochran's winning ticket came from Jamboree Foods. She said she plans on spending her \$50 prize at Sander Furniture.

Norton's Betty Harper brought in ticket No. 8808874, which she got at Flowers, Gifts and Greenhouse and found in the ad for First State Bank. She is probably going to spend her winnings on groceries.

Norma Ward, Clayton, was the last \$50 instant prize winner,



B. Harper



F. Cochran



K. VanSkiike



N. Ward

bringing in ticket No. 003893, which she picked up at Norton Shop and Save. Mrs. Ward found her lucky number in the ad for Jamboree Foods. She put her winnings toward renewing her subscription at *The Norton Telegram*.

Although all 10 instant prizes were collected, there were still two unclaimed numbers left this week. If anyone would have claimed them, they would have received a free six-month subscription to *The Telegram*.

The two remaining tickets were No. 2908831, which was given away at Kellie's and could be found in the ad for Norton Flowers, Gifts and Greenhouse, and No. 003847, which was given away at Norton Shop and Save and could

have been found in the ad for Sander Furniture.

*The Norton Telegram*, and Christmas On Us sponsors First State Bank, Kellie's, Norton Flowers Gifts and Greenhouse, Jamboree Foods, Norton Shop and Save, and Sander Furniture will be giving away a \$1,000 grand prize on Saturday, in addition to the 10 instant prize winners, who received \$50 each.

## Taxes, vehicle tags due this month

The first half of 2005 taxes need to be paid in the Norton County Treasurer's Office by Tuesday, Dec. 20, if there is to be no penalty.

Stubs from tax statements need to be either brought in or sent with payment to make sure the right account is credited.

Also, the deadline for those whose names begin with "U", "X", "Y" or "Z" is 11:30 a.m. Friday, Dec. 30. You must bring in or include proof of insurance for each vehicle, including the vehicle identification number, policy number and expiration date.

The treasurer's office will shut its computers down at 11:30 that Friday, so books can be balanced

by noon. The office will be closed Monday, Dec. 26, for the holidays. Regular business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**ATTENTION**  
Moffet Drug Customers  
**Confused?**  
About Medicare Part D  
Call Moffet Drug at 877-2721 to set up an appointment for Saturday, December 17

### Homeowners of all Ages

Apply now for a Home Preservation Grant to do major repairs on your home

You must reside in your home to apply. Actual funds are released based on income eligibility guidelines and the number of people living in the home. To qualify, \$10,000 Cash assets is the maximum savings the homeowner may have on hand. For best results applications must be completed by January 1, 2006

**Stop by the Norton County Economic Development Office at 116 N. First St., Suite 112 or Call Marlene—PH 785-874-4816 to receive an application in the mail**

# Ambulance to get new equipment

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County Emergency Medical Service will add blood pressure equipment to next year's budget.

Ambulance Director Andy Nielsen brought a broken blood pressure machine to the county commission meeting a week ago Monday. He said the machine came from the Lenora ambulance and was purchased in 1996.

"Right now, we are one blood pressure machine short," he said. "We've been taking blood pressure manually, but that's kind of hard to do when you're in the back of a moving ambulance. It's hard to hear with the stethoscope."

Mr. Nielsen said the units they are looking at will be added into the automatic external defibrillators, so it will all be together instead of having separate machines.

Each blood pressure unit will cost around \$3,000.

The commissioners asked what would happen when the

defibrillators wore out.

Mr. Nielsen said they have a 20-year life-expectancy so it shouldn't be a problem for awhile.

In other business, Mr. Nielsen told the commission:

- A bridge course to take first responders to emergency medical technician status is being held. The first class was Monday with seven people.
- The service has had more than 400 runs this year. Last year, the county's emergency medical service had 462 runs.
- They have received new cardiac pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) mannequins, which were purchased with grant money.
- The county should know on Jan. 20 if it will receive a grant to build a new ambulance building.
- They will have to replace a screen door at the ambulance building. Mr. Nielsen said they had a call when the doors were frozen shut. Breaking the screen door was the only way they could get in.

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