



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Emergency room changes to take effect Saturday

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The countdown is underway. In just a matter of days, only one group will be contracted for emergency room coverage at Citizens Medical Center following a decision by the hospital to terminate a long-standing agreement it had with Drs. Victor H. Hildyard, LaDonna Regier and Raymond Ketting of Colby Medical and Surgical Center's Medical Arts, Inc.

Prior to sending a termination letter last week to those doctors by the hospital's chief executive officer, Michael Boyles, the other contracted group — *Docs Who Care* — was contacted earlier this month.

"I received a call from Michael Boyles sometime during the week of Feb. 3-7," said Gary Coulter, executive vice-president of *Docs*

Who Care. The telephone conversation, he said, was asking whether or not his group could solely handle the contract for emergency room coverage.

Coulter said that Boyles asked him if his group would be in a position to take responsibility for covering the emergency room by Saturday, Feb. 22.

Under the current agreement with the Colby hospital, physicians with *Docs Who Care* cover the emergency room once every four nights and once every fourth weekend, Coulter said. The other scheduling was handled by Medical Arts, Inc.

Kevan Trenkle, chief financial officer at Citizens Medical Center, said today that the total contract for emergency room coverage is running at about \$300,000 per year. This total includes all physicians under both contracts covering the

emergency room.

He also said the decision to contract only with *Docs Who Care* was "a business decision," but did not elaborate. The last time the Colby hospital considered changing the emergency room coverage was in June of 2001. The idea was to "outsource" the emergency room by using doctors from Irving, Texas, through a company called Staff Care, Inc. At that time, Boyles said that, "often physicians who are on call for the emergency room are pulled away from their clinic patients or awake all night to see a patient at the hospital emergency room. Both instances detract from the quality of care the physicians can provide for their clinic patients."

During the June 2001 discussion about outsourcing the emergency room, Hildyard and four of the

other seven doctors who were here at that time disagreed with bringing in outside physicians. Dr. Eric Jacobsen and Dr. Jeffrey Kasselmann; however, were both supportive of the idea.

In the Colby hospital's most recent decision, Coulter also said that, "one doctor couldn't cover the emergency room," with regard to taking on the entire agreement for emergency physician services.

Coulter said his group does not want to exclude Drs. Hildyard, Regier and Ketting, but added that they would need to go through an application process and meet the *Docs Who Care* criteria for emergency room coverage.

Docs Who Care, he said, has been in Colby since late summer of 2002 after Drs. Jacobsen and Kasselmann moved, leaving the Family Center for Healthcare without a physician.

The organization has a group of 50 to 60 doctors in six states who choose to work in a non-traditional practice, Coulter said. Those states are Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Missouri, Utah, and Colorado. However, he said, about 90 percent of their doctors work in Kansas.

When officials at Colby's hospital approached *Docs Who Care* for services, it was decided that four doctors rotating on a weekly basis could provide sufficient coverage for the needs agreed on by Citizens Medical Center, Coulter said.

Drs. Ned Nixon, Stan Johnson, Pauline Aham-Neze and Scott Russell are the four who cover such services as clinic work, in-patient, on-call for obstetrics at the Family Center for Healthcare on weeknights and weekends, along with emergency room, Coulter said.

One doctor could not handle all

the services needed in Colby, he said. However, *Docs Who Care*, which provides coverage in Leoti and Russell as well, have been able to use one doctor working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and then rotating. *Docs Who Care* also provide mid-levels, Coulter said, such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

Coulter said the group was created to fill a void by providing short-term staffing to underserved areas.

When asked how much these services cost the Colby community and what the additional coverage in the emergency room would be, Coulter said he would not divulge that information.

As of today, Boyles was unavailable for comment due to meeting conflicts, and doctors with Medical Arts, Inc. still are unsure what the changes will mean.

Hazardous materials response agreement on council's agenda

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council meets for its regular meeting at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in council chambers.

A hazardous materials response agreement with the Kansas State Fire Marshal's office is one of many items on the agenda.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said today that the Colby Fire Department was selected as a chemical assessment team for the regional hazardous materials response program and believes this service will benefit more than

Colby and Thomas County.

In addition, the council will discuss and could take action on buying some new dumpsters for commercial sites; consider approval of a registration process for private wells within the city limits; and consider the recommendation from the planning commission regarding a billboard on the Holiday Inn property on Willow Ave.

Council members will also hear updates on a recent meeting with members of the Colby Country Club and city officials as to whether or not the city would be interested

in pursuing a means to provide public access to the golf course.

Other items in the consent agenda for approval Tuesday include a special use permit for operation of a bed and breakfast at 1060 Villa Vista with Reva and Jon Eicher, owners and approval of a proclamation recognizing April as Fair Housing Month.

The council will also review zoning regulations with respect to storage containers that was brought forward in a planning commission meeting, plus reviewing purchased power and generation costs.

Massive snowstorm buries the East

WASHINGTON (A) — Millions of people across the East spent Presidents' Day weekend with shovels in hand after a massive winter storm buried some areas with more than 2 feet of snow — snarling traffic, closing airports and causing at least a dozen deaths.

The storm was part of a huge system that left its mark in a variety of ways: blizzard conditions in the Northeast; rain, mudslides and floods in the South; heavy snowfall across the eastern United States.

Silver Spring, Md., was greeted by 25 inches of snow this morning and Berkeley County in West Vir-

ginia had 27 inches, the National Weather Service said.

Flakes piled up at a rate of up to 4 inches an hour in parts of Maryland, where Gov. Robert Ehrlich banned most civilian traffic from state highways. He was one of several governors to declare disaster areas.

"This is looking like the largest storm this year, and it may be one of the top five in our recorded history," said Lora Rakowski of Maryland's Highway Administration. "You name a place, they've got snow — and a lot of it."

At least a dozen deaths have been blamed on the weather since snow

and rain moved across the Plains on Friday. The storm moved east at a lethargic pace over the next two days, taking aim at the Ohio Valley and Mid-Atlantic before heading into the Northeast.

Forecasters predicted the storm would leave 16 to 20 inches in Philadelphia. Eighteen to 22 inches was expected in New York City, which readied 1,300 plows and 148,000 tons of salt, said Kathy Dawkins, a spokeswoman for the city's Department of Sanitation.

Most areas of the city had received more than 6 inches by 5 a.m. today.

No end in sight

More Democrats to run

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a half-dozen Democratic presidential aspirants already in the race, potential candidates in the next wave are about to test their prospects with party people and voters.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and former Illinois Sen. Carole Moseley-Braun say they're filing papers this week to run for president and will see what kind of response they get in the coming months. Retired Gen. Wesley Clark said he's thinking about a presidential candidacy and getting encouragement from others to run, but he has "no timetable."

The Democratic National Committee's schedule for speaking

appearances by the candidates appeared to be a catalyst for decisions announced by Moseley-Braun and Kucinich. Only candidates who have said publicly that they're running and forming exploratory committees are going to be speaking, party officials say.

Clark said he's thinking about running for president because he has worries about the Bush administration's direction in international affairs.

While Clark says he's not a member of a political party, "it would be hard to conceive of running as a Republican only because the administration's policy is what's causing me to have these concerns."

Briefly

Sacred Heart carnival nears

Sacred Heart School's annual carnival begins at 11 a.m. and concludes at 3 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 23. The event will feature lunch with bierocks and sloppy Joes, along with games and other prizes.

For questions, call 462-2813.

Red Cross classes planned

The Thomas County Chapter of the American Red Cross announces the following classes: shelter operations class from 8:30 a.m. until noon, Saturday; a first aid course from 6 to 10 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 27; and a two-day instructor training course on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 11 and 12, with times to be announced. Classes will also be offered by arrangement for a "Ready, Set, Roll" class to train drivers in the emergency response vehicle drivers and an introductory class to disaster services. To enroll, call the Red Cross office at (785) 462-7161. Courses are held at the Thomas County Office Complex.

Area Citizens meet Wednesday

The Area Citizens for Health Care meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday in the Colby Community Building's Little Theater. Officials said this will be an important informational meeting and encourage everyone to attend.

'Rain Rally' is Saturday

The first-ever *Northwest Kansas Pray for Rain Rally* has been scheduled for Saturday in the 4-H Building on the Thomas County Fairgrounds, Colby. Organizers are Leonard and Zelma Kinkade of rural Brewster. The event will run from 3-6 p.m. and residents in the 12 counties of northwest Kansas are cordially invited. The counties include those from Trego west to the Colorado line and north to the Nebraska line. Questions to Kinkade at (785) 694-2671.

Rotary Club plans soup supper

The Colby Rotary Club is sponsoring its annual soup sup-

per from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, during the Colby-Goodland basketball game at the Colby Community Building. The cost is \$4 for adults and \$2 for children 12 and under. Proceeds go toward Rotary projects

Sacred Heart sets enrollment

Sacred Heart School will be holding kindergarten and preschool enrollment on Wednesday, March 5, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in the school lobby at 1150 W. 6th St. School officials ask that parents or guardians bring a copy of their child's birth certificate, immunization records, social security number, and physical. For questions, call 462-2813.

Recognition night is Tuesday

Colby High School will hold senior/parent recognition night Tuesday, honoring basketball boys and girls, managers, trainers, drill team and pep band. The recognition will begin as soon as the varsity Lady Eagles end their game, somewhere around 7:45 p.m.

Flag guys ready to roll



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Ralph Fischer (on ladder) handed flags to Alvin Volk this morning in Vic Oelke's garage in Colby. Oelke and a crew of 12 volunteers were heading out before sunrise to put flags out for Presidents' Day throughout the city. All together, the group put out 251 flags. This is an ongoing project and includes all major holidays.

Bush mulls next move on Saddam

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush administration is mulling its next move in the showdown with Saddam Hussein, including a possible attempt to push a new United Nations resolution authorizing force against Iraq.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said Sunday it was becoming more obvious that the Iraqi president would not disarm voluntarily, and that the U.N. Secu-

rity Council was letting him get away with it.

"The Security Council has to be an instrument of peace, but it has to be an instrument of peace that has teeth, or it is never going to be able to deal with the myriad difficult actors out there in international politics who intend to disturb that peace," Rice said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

The White House had a long holi-

day weekend to weigh options after being rebuffed Friday as most members of the Security Council lined up behind France's call for more weapons inspections and against military action.

Rice said that the administration may ask the council to take up a new resolution authorizing force against Iraq, although she said it wouldn't be necessary to take action to forcibly disarm Saddam.



Moisture likely

Tonight...cloudy. Lows in the mid 20s. West wind 5 to 10 mph becoming northeast late. Tuesday...mostly cloudy with a chance of rain. Highs in the mid 40s. Northwest wind 5 to 10 mph. Chance of rain 30 percent. Tuesday night...cloudy. A chance of snow or rain until midnight. Lows in the lower 20s. Chance of precipitation 30 percent. Wednesday...mostly sunny. Highs in the mid 50s. Wednesday night...partly cloudy...Then becoming cloudy. Lows in the mid 20s. Thursday...mostly cloudy with a chance of showers during the day, then a chance of snow showers during the night. Breezy. Highs in the lower 50s.

The numbers

Sunday's high, 47
Low this morning, 15
Soil temperature, 33
Year ago, 51 and 15
Month's precipitation, 0.26 (0.14 inches received on Friday)
Month's snowfall, 2 inches
Records, 72 in 1961 and -13 in 1978

