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Suspension's effect addressed by Schwanke

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

Following news on Thursday that a Colby physician's privileges were permanently suspended at Citizens Medical Center, Inc., the president of the hospital board of trustees talked about what that means and how it could affect the medical community in the future.

Vern Schwanke, president of the board, said that Dr. Victor H. Hildyard at Colby Medical and Surgical Center, exhausted all avenues required through the peer review process stemming from the original allegations of improper conduct by an employee of the hospital nearly one year ago.

"The peer review process is completed and pursuant to the fair hearing requirements," said Carol Bonebrake, attorney for the hospital board, about the final decision to suspend the physician.

When asked if Dr. Hildyard had any other avenues available to him to retain his privileges at the hospital, Bonebrake said the medical staff bylaws explain the process, but did not elaborate further.

Dr. Hildyard was allowed to continue seeing patients at the hospital following a ruling by Judge Jack Burr of Goodland in early May of 2002 based on the fact that the judge believed the administrative process needed to be carried out to the solution. After attempting to suspend the doctor's privileges a second time in the fall of 2002, the judge again ruled to lift the summary suspension until the entire process was exhausted.

Regarding stabilization of health care in Colby and the surrounding area, along with what are the next steps by the board, Schwanke said the hospital board of trustees have reviewed the management contract, professional leadership and alternative procedures to ensure a viable hospital.

"We look forward to working with the local media, community groups and individual citizens," he said, adding that "there are many restraints on the board's ability to respond to each and every question because of all of the federal and state laws that restrict the dissemination of information."

Schwanke added that the board has limitations on what they can and

cannot say, but that the first priority is setting health care policy for those they serve.

Michael O'Neal of Hutchinson, who is Dr. Hildyard's attorney, was unavailable to comment today, but his associate said he would be making a statement for Monday's edition of the *Free Press*.

However, O'Neal did say late last week that written arguments in the administrative process were due on Tuesday, April 8, which was two days before the decision was made to terminate Dr. Hildyard's privileges.

Michael Boyles, who was the chief executive officer at Citizens Medical Center, resigned his position last Friday. Schwanke said today that Kevan Trenkle is the acting interim.

"He (Kevan) is working closely with Dr. LaDonna Regier, chief of the medical staff at the hospital, Dr. Raymond Ketting and the Docs Who Care physicians to assure continuity of quality patient care," Schwanke said.

In addition, Schwanke said that there is a "transition team" made up of hospital staff in place to coordinate and begin directives of the board and chief executive officer.

When asked about some people's fear regarding the hospital and HMOs, Schwanke said that first of all an HMO is a health insurance reimbursement mechanism and not a type of hospital reimbursement.

"The challenge that Citizens Medical Center faces are not unique to Colby," he said. "Affordable health care is a national issue and rural hospitals face special challenges," he said, "and we are continuing our physician recruitment efforts and addressing reimbursement issues."

O'Neal's associate said that Dr. Hildyard's attorney would more than likely discuss his reaction to what happened on Thursday, along with the possibility of talking about the options available to his client at this point.

Even though Dr. Hildyard cannot see patients at the Colby facility following the board of trustees action on Thursday, it was confirmed previously that he does have privileges at the Logan County Hospital in Oakley and at the Regional Medical Center in Goodland.

Johnson County gets a new judge

OLATHE (AP)—Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has named lawyer Thomas Sutherland to fill a district judge opening in Johnson County. It was the first such appointment of her administration.

Sutherland, 43, of Lenexa, will fill a position left open by the retirement of William Cleaver. Sutherland, who has specialized in civil practice with the firm Holbrook & Osborn, hopes to begin his new duties by early next month.



CRYSTAL RUCKER/Colby Free Press

Oh, yeah!

From the mouths of babes sometimes comes music. And that was the case this morning when the kindergarten classes at Colby Elementary School presented their spring tea. "Sounds a Little Fishy to Me," was the name of the musical treat directed by Jennifer Koel. Singing their hearts out on the front row were (left to right) Mikayla Cody, Danielle Foster and Shaila Giebler. In the second row are Samantha Lindberg, Logan Jones, Ryan Stevens and Tanner Rook. No question about it, they were giving it their all!

Citing hospital's fate

Group taking worries to commission

By **PATTY DECKER**

Free Press Editor

Members of the Area Citizens for Health Care board plan to meet with the Thomas County Commissioners on Monday at 9 a.m. at the courthouse regarding Citizens Medical Center, Inc.

John Kern, president of the board, said today that their primary reason for talking with the commissioners is to save the hospital.

"We want to see if there is any possibility of getting a special election organized so that people in the county can have a voice in determining the direction to take in helping the hospital," he said.

Kern said he believes that if something isn't done soon, the hospital will go under having lost more than \$771,000 in operations last year, according to information he has from an audit report.

"Anybody who cares about our hospital should be at this meeting and let the commissioners know what concerns they have," he said.

Kern, along with other members of the board, are not sure what options are available to the public, but believe they cannot sit idle and do nothing.

He said he hopes the commissioners will be able to provide information that will assist in their quest

to stabilize the medical community.

"We are asking for the county's help by offering its citizens any options that could be available to them," he said.

For questions or information about Monday's meeting, Kern encourages people to call him at 462-2969.

In addition to the scheduled appointment with the county commissioners on Monday, Dennis Horney, another member of Area Citizens, said an emergency meeting of the group will also be held in the coming week.

"Following the news that Dr. Victor Hildyard's privileges were per-

manently revoked on Thursday," Horney said, "we are urging everyone to attend this area-wide meeting."

Horney said the meeting will be held in the gymnasium on the main floor of the Colby Community Building at 7 p.m. next Thursday.

"Anyone and everyone who can attend is welcome," Horney said today.

Along with seeing representatives of the Area Citizens group, the commissioners also have scheduled Clair Schrock, county road supervisor, regarding road classification and Mike Baughn, undersheriff, regarding inmate medical issues.

By **MICHELLE L. HAWKINS**

Colby Free Press

The fair is less than four months away and the Thomas County Fair Board was busy making plans toward that end at their Thursday night meeting.

Marie Skolout, pageant coordinator, presented ideas concerning the rodeo queen and princess contest. She is hoping to order the saddle early to be able to display it around the area to draw contestants. The board approved a budget of \$2,000 for the contest.

In other business:

- The board heard reports from county Extension agent D'Ette Scholtz. Scholtz also questioned the board about release times for the projects and it was decided to allow

projects to be picked up all day during the release date as long as they were picked up before the time to clean up the fairgrounds. She also reported the 4-H Spring Horse Show will be June 9, unless it rains, in which case it will be rescheduled to June 12.

- Board member Jim Malcolm said he and fellow board member Stan Strange had repaired the window restrains in the sheep barn and that the water line in the commercial building had been fixed since it froze and broke.

Malcolm also reported that the board has drawn \$10,000 from Mastec for camping fees and suggested the money be used to put in more sites. Strange suggested some of the funds be used to upgrade

some of the utility outlets on the current sites.

- Darrel Dible reported on the progress of the Thomas County Amusement Association. He said they have already purchased three adult rides and are looking to purchase three more children's rides by fair time. The group is still accepting donations and will accept help in a variety of areas. Dible said the Sheridan County fair donated 10 to 12 game booths to the association as well.

- Gary Garrett said the rodeo has been approved by the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association for the dates of July 29 and 30.

- New board members Justin Alexander and Brad Skolout are the committee chairs for the parade.

They reported a letter has been sent out to county schools about a contest seeking a theme for the parade. First and third graders will have an opportunity to come up with a theme and a prize will be awarded to the class with the best theme. Alexander said they will also have an honorary float in the parade for their class.

- The board is seeking a new sponsor for the free barbecue to be held on July 30. The sponsor helps with the barbecue and also serves the meal to the public.

- The new groundskeeper is Richard Britton. He has been working with Fred Stephenson, the former groundskeeper, to learn what needs to be done. The board will honor Stephenson at the May meeting.

Briefly

Health department to close early

The Thomas County Health Department will be closed on Wednesday from 1 to 5 p.m. for staff in-service. For questions or other information, call (785) 462-4596 or stop by the office at 350 S. Range Ave., Suite 2, Colby.

Dible benefit scheduled Saturday

A benefit for Ken (Butch) Dible, former resident of Colby and a former reserves police officer, will be held Saturday at the National Guard Armory in Colby from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. He has been diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia and is receiving treatment in Wichita. Drawings, a silent auction, karaoke, homemade chili, noodle soup and cinnamon rolls are on the menu.

The Colby Police Department will have its Ident-a-kid program available starting at noon. Ryan Wark will have his stock car 8FR available for all the see. Free will donations will be accepted.

Easter egg hunt is Saturday

The Colby Kiwanis Club will sponsor its annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday at Fike Park for children from birth to 9 years old. For those three and under, the hunt will begin at 10 a.m.; ages 4 to 6 at 10:10 a.m.; and children 7 to 9 at 10:20 a.m.

Endowment meeting is Monday

The Colby Community College Endowment Association will hold its annual meeting on Monday at 5:30 p.m. All members are urged to attend. It will be held in the Fireside Lounge in the Robert Burnett Memorial Student Union. For more information, contact Nick Wells at (785) 462-4684.

'Church open for prayer

Rev. Carol Rahn, pastor for the First Presbyterian Church in Colby, has announced the church will be open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. while the country is at war. Those wishing to

pray or have quiet meditation may use the church at 515 W. Fourth Street.

School board to meet April 21

The Colby school board's next regularly scheduled meeting will be April 21 at 7 p.m. in the board room at the Administration Building, 210 South Range.

Barbershop Chorus to hold concert

The Tumbleweed Chorus will hold their annual concert on Saturday, April 26. The choir will present "Dixieland Harmony" at both 3 and 7:30 p.m. at the Colby Community College Cultural Arts Center.

Tickets may be purchased at the door for \$8 or in advance for \$7.

For tickets or information call 462-6552 or 460-8640. The concert will also feature guest appearances by Very Light Opera Company and Patent Pending.



Warm, windy

Tonight...mostly clear and warm. Lows in the mid 40s. South wind 10 to 20 mph. Saturday...becoming partly sunny...Breezy and continued warm. Highs in the lower 80s. South wind 15 to 25 mph...Gusting to 35 mph late. Saturday night...partly cloudy and warm. Lows in the mid 40s. Sunday...partly sunny and continued warm. Highs in the mid 80s. Sunday night...partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 50s. Monday...mostly clear. A slight chance of showers and thunderstorms during the night. Highs in the lower 80s.

The numbers

Thursday's high, 80
Low this morning, 31
Soil temperature, 52
Year ago, 72 and 39
Month's precipitation, 0.30
Month's snowfall, 2 inches
Records, 89 in 1977 and 7 in 1989

