



Hospital to limit visits over flu cases

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Colby's Citizens Medical Center has not admitted many people with flu, but the Family Center for Health Care clinic has been testing a lot of people sick with respiratory virus. It's bad enough that the hospital has decided to put restrictions on visits.

Kevan Trenkle, chief executive officer of the hospital, said administrators met Thursday afternoon to decide on rules for visits. Children under 12, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems should not come to the hospital for visits, he said. If babies are being delivered, no children other than their siblings should be there.

Trenkle said the restrictions will be in effect for "probably a month" before the hospital re-

evaluates them.

"The clinic is saying they've had a lot more positive tests for the flu," he said, adding that the clinic still is treating a lot more people for lesser upper respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis or pneumonia.

"I don't have any numbers," Trenkle said, "I just see them come in. It's higher than usual, definitely higher than usual."

Since the week of Christmas, the clinic has seen 20 to 40 people a day who test positive for upper respiratory illnesses, said manager Scott Focke. Between 10 and 20 a day have been testing positive for the flu.

"We have seen really an uptick of positive tests over the last two weeks," he added.

Enough people have been coming in to get tested, Focke said,

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Flu becoming epidemic in U.S.

By the Associated Press

The flu season has hit Kansas hard this year. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say it's one of 41 states designated as having a "widespread" flu outbreak.

Robert Moser, state secretary of health and environment, told *The Topeka Capital-Journal* (bit.ly/13ILpR2) the department uses several methods to track the illness, including monitoring the percentage of patients seeking health care who exhibit influenza-like symptoms. The typical peak for flu cases is February, and Moser says the rates in Kansas so far are higher and earlier than what the state usually reports.

A department spokeswoman, Barbara Hersh, said more than 460 influenza and pneumonia deaths have been reported in Kansas so far this season.

During the 2011-2012 influenza season, flu and pneumonia contributed to or directly caused more than 1,300 deaths in Kansas.

Across the nation, flu is more widespread, but the number of hard-hit states has declined, health officials said today.

Flu season started early this winter and includes a strain that tends to make people sicker. Officials forecast a potentially bad flu season, following last year's unusually mild one.

The latest numbers, however, hint that the flu season may already have peaked in some spots.

Flu was widespread in 47 states last week, up from 41 the week before, the Centers for Disease Control said. Many cases may be mild, but the only states without widespread flu are California, Mississippi and Hawaii.

The hardest-hit states, those where large numbers of people were treated for flu-like illness dropped to 24 from 29. Those with less activity include Florida, Arkansas and South Carolina in South, the first region hit.

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Firm hired to study enforcement center

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After hearing a presentation from a group of Missouri architects, Thomas County commissioners voted Monday to spend between \$3,500 and \$5,000 on a study to determine whether the county needs a new law enforcement center or improvements to the current building.

Artie Lucas, client relations and business manager of the Goldberg Group, an architectural firm from St. Joseph, Mo., said he had been approached by commissioner-elect Mike Baughn at a Kansas Association of Counties conference last fall. Baughn added that he'd visited with Lucas and invited him to give a presentation, saying he was impressed with the firm's history.

Monday, Lucas showed a portfolio and described some of his firm's recent projects. He said the group has been in business for about 30 years and has planned government facilities, including

jails, for the last 27. In that time, he said, they've designed over 200 law enforcement centers, ranging from facilities with 40 beds to as many as 800.

Present for other business, Undersheriff Marc Finley said the present Thomas County jail can hold up to 15. Although it is not always filled, he added, the department does have to house inmates elsewhere at times.

"Double bunking causes fights," he said, "and we consistently have two inmates in Atwood. We don't have sight and sound barriers between males and females, either."

Commissioner Paul Steele noted that the county budgeted \$26,000 for six months for "farming inmates out of the county."

Finley agreed to give Lucas a tour of the Law Enforcement Center so he could get a better idea of what the county needs and give some suggestions. Afterwards, Lucas told commissioners he thought the "potential for risk is high."

"Since the paper is here," he said, "I'd rather not say what I really think, but, basically it's an accident looking for a place to hap-

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Kids learn potato meal at Extension cooking class

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Miah Jackson (above) dropped a peeled potato into a pot at the Kids at Cookin' class put on by Thomas County Extension on Thursday afternoon in the Community Building kitchen. Jalyn Sabatka (left) concentrated hard to peel her potato, bound to become part of a shepherd's pie. Extension Agent Diann Gerstner watched as Kara O'Brien (below), Jackson and Jenna Reinert worked on their pies.



Conservation District to hold annual meeting

The Thomas County Conservation District will hold its annual meeting at noon Wednesday, Feb. 13, at the Meadow Lake Golf Club with a new focus on farming and the winners of the annual Kansas Bankers Awards.

District Manager Debbie Potter said she hopes to see at least a hundred people at the meeting. In the past, she added, the crowd has been bigger, but this year there could be more farmers and ranchers.

The meeting will include an appreciation

lunch for farmers and ranchers, which has been held at night in past year. Chili, chicken-noodle soup and cinnamon rolls will be served at the "come as you are" lunch, with people encouraged not to dress up.

There might be fewer kids and their parents at the meeting this year, Potter said. The annual conservation poster contest, for which awards are usually given out at the meeting, has been moved forward to the spring because of conflicts with kids' schedules.

The Kansas Bankers Association Awards for soil conservation and windbreak establishment will be given out. Other business includes an election for one supervisor, or board member, and a report from the district of the past year's financial activity.

To make a reservation for the meeting, call the conservation office at 462-7482 by Wednesday, Jan. 30.

