



Lt. Kelly McGuire (far right), Highway Patrol troop commander from Hays, talked with Mike and Roberta Bretz Tuesday night during a "town hall meeting" in Goodland, while Trooper John McMahan from Colby listened. The Bretzes were the only citizens to show up. Photo by Rachel Miscal/The Goodland Daily News

Highway Patrol in need of troopers

PATROL, from Page 1

he told an audience of four, including an editor and a reporter from *The Goodland Daily News*, "and 21 have no troopers. We can't give a good response time."

Lt. Kelly McGuire, Troop D commander, said the troop is spread thin, with 28 of its 33 troopers filling roles as supervisors or assigned to specialized duties, including strategic response team, accident response team, marksman, pilot or drug dog handler. In Hays, he said, there are no troopers whose only job is road patrol.

Factoring in days off and vacation time, Lt. McGuire said, on average there are only five troopers patrolling northwest Kansas over two shifts each day, and it's like that all over the state.

Sgt. Langdon said there's no easy solution, because the patrol can't find people who want to fill empty spots and more and more troopers are retiring or quitting every day.

"In the next five years," he said, "we will lose approximately 100 troopers to retirement. It will take a year to replace them because of training time."

Meanwhile, Sgt. Langdon said, the patrol's starting salary — at roughly \$26,000 a year, which is now the lowest among surrounding states — isn't helping to bring in new blood and troopers are leaving for better-paying jobs in other states.

"Some are eyeballing other agencies," he said, "where the pay is

higher."

Using charts and an overhead projector, Langdon showed that the patrol is fifth from the bottom for starting salaries in 16 Kansas law enforcement agencies — including police and sheriff's departments.

When it comes to what states pay their troopers, he said, Kansas is now the lowest after Oklahoma recently gave its troopers a 25 percent raise.

A Colby trooper, John McMahan, talked about his duties with the strategic response team — which is trained to handle major emergencies involving drugs or weapons, hostages and barricaded suspects. He said in the past year, he's had two job offers from agencies in other states. Though he'd be making \$15,000 more, McMahan said, he hasn't accepted the offers — at least not yet.

"It won't be much longer," he said, "and I'll have to say, 'I've got to look out for myself.'"

The patrol has been forced to start recruiting outside Kansas, Sgt. Langdon said, but a good percentage of those who do join don't last long.

Lt. Winston said when he joined the force in 1978, the patrol had 1,800 applications for 36 openings.

"Now less than 300 are taking the test each year," he said, "and we're lucky if we fill all of the openings."

The agency is looking to fill 46 positions next year, Sgt. Langdon said, but there are only 33 recruits in the current class. He expects three or more to drop out during the first week of

training.

Lt. McGuire said the patrol is meeting with citizens across the state to share problems, answer questions, listen to suggestions and, most importantly, recruit troopers.

He said public turnout for the sessions — there will be 29 by the end of the year — has been low. McGuire said in Wichita, with a population over 300,000, only 30 people showed up, but numbers have been lower in north-west Kansas.

In Phillips County, seven came, he said, and 12 attended in Colby, but many were officers or relatives. The meeting in Goodland had the lowest turnout, with two citizens, besides those representing the patrol or the media, attending.

"We appreciate and support the patrol," said Roberta Bretz, who came with her husband Mike. "We had two Highway Patrol troopers that lived across the street."

But they are gone now.

Lt. Winston said he thinks it's because they weren't getting paid enough.

"Twenty years ago," he said, "we were the highest or second highest paid officers in the state. Now we're not in the top 10 in Kansas or the country."

He said garbage men and dog catchers in eastern Kansas make more than troopers do. Lt. McGuire said it's not fair.

"You might get bit by a dog," he said, "or have to smell some nasty stuff, but you won't get shot."

Farmers struggle to harvest sunflowers

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Tom and Sandra Sjule know the winter landscape on their farm will include plenty of white, but they hope they can avoid too much brown — from acres of unharvested sunflowers.

About 2,500 of the couple's 3,000 acres of sunflowers still stand amid snow drifts atop the saturated soil. Like many farmers, the Sjules have been unable to harvest the oilseeds because of poorly early winter weather conditions.

"Every time we started (combining), it would rain," Sandra Sjule said Tuesday. "Then it snowed. It's been a while since we had an early snow."

About 7 percent of the state's sunflower crop, or about 80,000 acres, remained unharvested as of Tuesday, said Larry Kleingartner, executive director of the Bismarck-based National Sunflower Association.

That was an improvement over Friday, when about 12 percent of the crop remained. More favorable weather conditions are allowing producers to get into the fields, but the work is not easy on farmers or equipment, Sjule said.

Farmers who do not get all their crops combined can harvest them in the spring. But the seed-carrying heads tend to dry in the warmer weather of early spring, and a field also can be crushed by heavy winter snows, causing the heads to shatter.

Kathy Gilbertson of the Risk Management Agency in Billings, Mont., said farmers might be eligible for crop insurance payments.

However, the crop is adjusted at the end of the insurance period, which was Nov. 30, she said. If a farmer loses part of a harvestable crop over winter, that portion would not be covered.

"That's a risk they have to take over the winter," Gilbertson said.

Ken Swenson, a Flaxton farmer and chairman of the sunflower association, said most farmers are doing everything they can to harvest their crops now.

"When the crop is out there in the field over winter, you're going to have heads that are going to break off, you're going to have more wildlife damage," he said.

North Dakota leads the nation in

sunflower production, but the late harvest is not likely to significantly change October sunflower production estimates or boost low prices, said John Sandbakken, the international marketing director for the National Sunflower Association.

Forecasts typically factor in a 3 percent harvest loss, he said. Nationwide, about 5 percent of this year's crop remains to be harvested, he said. The next sunflower production report is due Jan. 11.

"If I were out visiting with a grower, I wouldn't suggest he hold back on his sales because of this factor," Kleingartner said.

A glut of corn oil on the market and other factors are keeping prices near record-low levels, he said. With a government subsidy triggered by the low prices, farmers are getting about \$9.30 per hundredweight, similar to last year at this time.

However, production in Argentina, a major sunflower producer, is expected to be down significantly because wet weather has delayed planting.

kanorado chronology

By Dixie Hooker

Kanorado Correspondent

Useless facts: People do not get sick from cold weather; it's from being indoors a lot more.

Darrell and Fran Christenson enjoyed Thanksgiving with Darrell's brother, Ted Christenson of Goodland. They enjoyed an excellent meal at the Safari Restaurant in Goodland.

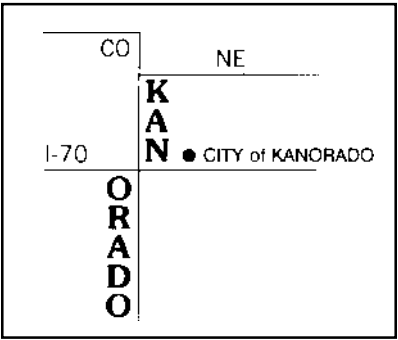
Their son, Lee of Edmond, Okla., had come home a few days prior to Thanksgiving to spend time with them.

Their daughter-in-law, Kahlene, couldn't come with Lee as she had an abundance of tests to take at the nursing school she is attending. But with Lee's arrival he brought good news of a promotion he received.

He is now a funeral director at Hahn, Cook, Street and Draper of Oklahoma City. So congratulations to Lee and we wish him and Kahlene much success in their futures.

Things my mother taught me: My mother taught me how to solve physics problems - "If I yelled because I saw a meteor coming toward you, would you listen then?"

Mary Blystone wanted me to share a poem with you that her mother Dorothy had kept for many years. Mary wasn't sure where her mother got the poem, but thought you might enjoy "A Smile." A smile is like a golden key that opens every gate. It also unlocks the iron door of jealousy and hate. Be sure you never lose your key and keep it



from rust. Use it daily and let it shine with the golden glow of trust. Your smile will start a chain of smiles and as the links grow strong, you'll form a chain of friends like gold, so pass your smile along.

Point to ponder: People will accept your ideas much more readily if you tell them that Benjamin Franklin said it first.

John and Sara Veselik enjoyed Thanksgiving Day with their daughter, Valerie, and her husband Rob and their two daughters in Broomfield, Colo. Then they hopped a plane to Pennsylvania where they visited with Sara's brothers and their families and Sara's mom. Reportedly they had an excellent holiday.

Things you wish you could say at work: Thank you. We're all refreshed and challenged by your unique point of view.

Ole Phil, Ben and I enjoyed time with my brother Shell Bryant, wife

Cindy and son Blake of Macks Creek, Mo., for the Thanksgiving holiday. A friend Lynne Emling of Denver came down and spent the day with us.

We all had a great time, not only with the Cornish game hen Phil's brother, Butch, fixed for us, but with playing a game of Balderdash.

Hickonics: Bammer (noun) - The State west of Jawjuh. Capitol is Berminhayum. Usage: "A tornader jes' went through Bammer an' left \$20,000,000 in improvements."

Mark your calendars to attend the annual Kanorado Christmas Festival put on by PRIDE.

It will be held Saturday, Dec. 9. To start off, Santa with the help of the Kanorado Lions Club will arrive with treats to hand out.

The Twice Loved Toy Shop, along with a bake sale, will be in the Senior Center. A scavenger hunt will be on for the afternoon along with special music.

Drawings will be held and also many other activities. The Little Butterfly Café will be open for breakfast and lunch and tickets will be sold for a hand-tied comforter.

It proceeds will go to the park. Stop in and shop at the Prairie Rose Mercantile while you are in town, too.

Rule to live by: Thou shall not become "bogged down" by frustration, for 90 percent of it is rooted in self-pity and will only interfere with positive action.

Hospital numbers were up for month

HOSPITAL, from Page 1

in increased collection of patient accounts.

"Our collection department has done pretty well," Laue said, "but I believe we can do better by making quicker follow-ups and not waiting for 90 days. We also want to add another collection agency to help increase efforts, and to look at having more payments at the time of service for non-covered items."

"Most of the patients know what is covered and what their deductible is. This would help reduce the accounts we are dealing with and improve revenue."

"Our most important goal is to provide the best possible patient care and have the best possible patient satisfaction. As a team, we believe if we can do these two things we will be able to get the financial picture back in line."

"Is this an attainable budget?" asked board member Lynn Hoelting.

"Yes," Laue replied.

"Does it include any revenue enhancements?" Hoelting asked.

"It does not include any extra revenue figures, but is a reflection of the current system," Laue said. "I did not want to put any blue sky figures in that might not be realistic."

Saying it was something the board could live with, member Pete Whalen made a motion to approve the revised budget.

Board member Dr. Greg Bongers noted that the hospital staff had been very busy and that the numbers look better.

Mary Ann Elliott, another member of the management team, said the patient census had been up to 27, which was the highest in a long time.

Looking at the income for October, Laue said there had been an increase of over \$103,000 in gross patient revenue, and that despite increased costs, operations showed a profit of \$11,764 and a net profit of \$36,605. It was first

profitable month this year.

He said November had been a busy month, but he did not know how it would look when the numbers were completed.

Dale Shields, also a member of the management team, said they had been reaching out to the staff to answer questions and reassure them that the hospital was not closing.

"We have had some tough questions, and had to give some tough answers," Shields said. "When asked about raises for next year, we told them there wouldn't be any. We have received good support from the staff, as we explain that we are all working to bring the hospital back to a sound financial footing."

When asked if the management team was being accepted by the staff, Shields said he thought they had credibility with the staff.

Elliott said she had been working closely with Brenda McCants and Brenda Cunningham, supervisors of patient relations and nursing, urging everyone to work together and treat patients with respect. She said the staff can talk to her and that has helped make people a little less nervous.



You are invited to join us!

The Insurance Agency, Inc.

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8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.


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is extending our drive up hours over the holidays from 7:30am to 5:30pm.



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Starts Thursday, Dec. 7th • Ends Dec. 12th

Ladies Fancy Sweatshirts & Tops <i>Big Selection</i> 20% off	One Table Men's Shirts Flannel & Chamois 25% off
Children's Sportswear Healthtex - Oshkosh - Star Ride <i>Great Selection</i> 25% off	SCOOTERS Reg. \$69 ⁹⁸ NOW \$49⁹⁹
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