

Day care to open without hospital's cash

DAY CARE, from Page 1

building, we need to ask the hospital for \$5,000."

Board member Artie Showalter said she felt it was an important step for both the hospital and the community and made the motion to donate \$5,000 to the Topside Tots.

Member Pete Whalen called it an investment in the future when he seconded the motion.

"I am all in favor of a day care center," Hoelting said, "but I am not sure the hospital ought to be the one donating."

Board member Larry McCants said he had to abstain because his bank was working with the group to help finance the project. He said he was in favor of the project, but could not vote on the matter because of a conflict of interest. When a hand vote was called for, McCants left the room, leaving only seven board members to vote.

Board members Steve Evert and Irvin said they agreed with Hoelting that it was a good project, but did not feel it was proper for the hospital to spend the money considering its financial condition.

Dr. Bongers, a board member of both the hospital and the day care group, said the hospital would find

it difficult to grow and attract young people without having a day care center.

"I believe this is a small amount to invest to help the hospital grow," he said.

Hospital Human Resource Director Dale Schields said that the need for day care has made it difficult to recruit employees for the hospital, and that it is a constant question from those being interviewed for positions.

Penny Nemecheck, board secretary who helped write a \$43,000 grant for the day care center, said they have a waiting list of 15 for the center, including five current hospital employees as well as several from the school district and the vocational college.

Elliott said the problem is that while the grant can be used to open and operate the day care center, it cannot be used to purchase a building.

With McCants present, the vote had been split 3-2 with Joyce Moore trying to decide which way to vote and Hoelting thinking he may have to break a tie if she voted against. McCants' abstention would count as a no vote under parliamentary procedure, but he made it an odd number by leaving the room before the hand vote.

"I am having a hard time deciding," she said. "I really want to see day care in Goodland, but I am also worried about the hospital finances. "Where is the rest of the community support? I am afraid there will not be enough support for the project and we could look foolish spending money this way."

Nemecheck said many people have indicated support, but much of it is in-kind rather than up front cash. She said the school district was looking at selling meals to the center so they would not have to install a commercial kitchen. (The school board decided Monday night to let the day care pick up lunches.)

"I understand the hospital finances are tight," Dr. Bongers said, "but this is a way to help us find the good people we need to bring the people to us for services. In the past we have spent much more for less return."

When Hoelting asked for a hand vote, Showalter, Whalen and Bongers raised their hands in favor, and Moore made it a majority, saying "I really want to see day care succeed, and I hope I don't regret this."

Irvin and Evert voted no, and Hoelting did not vote because there was not a tie. Board member Dennis Shank was absent, and McCants was out of the room.

Board approves education policy

HOSPITAL, from Page 1

Vignery had reviewed the draft and said it would be within the law and cover the needs of the hospital.

Board member Pete Whalen moved to approve the policy, saying it was a good step, and that if changes need to be made later it can be amended. The board unanimously approved the motion.

Turning to a request for assistance from Alan David, an emergency medical technician seeking to take an advanced program, Jolly said the total of the request was \$27,850, and he hoped the hospital would agree to pay one-third with the Northwest Kansas Area Foundation taking another third and Sherman County taking the final third.

The costs includes \$4,695 for the cost of the course, \$2,970 for meals and rent expense and \$20,216 for family expenses while he was attending the nine-month course.

Board member Larry McCants said he was uncomfortable paying for things other than the actual cost of training and related costs.

He suggested that the board tell David they would possibly have about \$2,500 available to help repay the cost of the course after it was completed.

Lynn Hoelting, who was acting as chairman because of the absence of Doug Irvin, said the request did not fit the criteria of the new policy, and felt David would have to find outside fi-

nancing. Human Resource Director Dale Schields said David was applying for a loan to cover the cost, but was having some trouble getting all the proper signatures.

He said he did not know what the status was at that time. Jolly said he had not talked to David about the request.

McCants made a motion to have Jolly notify David that the request does not fit the new policy.

Looking at the financial figures for May, Andy Laue, chief financial officer, said it was not a great month with a loss of \$42,450, which brings the total for the year \$96,993. The one bright spot is that this is less than half of the loss at this time last year (\$212,046).

However, the year-to-date loss is about \$22,000 greater than expected in the budget, which had anticipated a loss of \$74,970.

One area of the expenses which was ahead of budget was purchased services, which includes the mobile MRI machine, mobile nuclear medicine and currently the mobile mammogram machine.

Laue said there continues to be some problems with a couple of departments being ahead of where they should be in labor costs.

"We are talking to the department heads and trying to develop a benchmark to bring these within proper limits," he said.

The revenue for May was up by

\$42,000 and the hospital was busy, but the expenses were also up by \$46,000. The loss of \$42,450 was \$29,038 greater than expected in the budget, which had planned on a loss of \$13,412.

In other business, the board:

- Approved revisions to the policy manuals for medical records and respiratory therapy.
- Agreed to suspend the capital campaign until the goals have been reviewed. It was also suggested that the hospital needs a full-time development person to reach the goals.
- Jolly told the board the new mammography machine is awaiting certification, and that may take several weeks yet.

- Heard a presentation from Jason Scheopner on the compliance plan, which is designed to reduce fraud and abuse of federal health-care programs. He said the first portion of the program has been established to prevent violations of the federal laws, detect violations, and document the hospital's efforts in case a violation is not detected.
- Held a 10 minute executive session dealing with personnel, and took no action when returning to open session.
- Set a joint conference with the staff for 7 p.m. Thursday, July 26, at Sugar Hills Country Club.
- Set 6:30 p.m. Monday, July 23, as the date for the next meeting in the hospital conference room.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Catfish prices drop in United States

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The nation's catfish industry is gearing up for a potential legal battle over the import of fish from Vietnam that producers say is netting up to 10 percent of their business.

Hugh Warren, executive vice president of Catfish Farmers of America, said prices are dropping for U.S.-raised catfish and the Vietnamese fish is to blame.

Producers say as much as 1 million pounds of Vietnamese catfish is imported into the United States each month.

U.S. Reps. Ronnie Shows and Benmie Thompson, both Mississippi Democrats, want the Bush administration to require country-of-origin la-

bel on catfish, particularly that coming into the country from Vietnam. They said the Vietnamese package their catfish to imitate U.S. brands and logos.

Warren said growers are optimistic President Bush will support the new labeling. If Bush doesn't, Warren said the industry must look at other ways — including a lawsuit — to halt the price decline before domestic producers are hurt.

"We are not ready to concede that we cannot make some very positive steps toward resolving the labeling and naming issue," Warren said. "We do have some legal options available to us in the event that we are unsuccessful in getting an agreement."

Catfish is big business in Mississippi and elsewhere in the South.

Mississippi has roughly 110,000 acres of ponds and produced 600 million pounds of catfish last year — about 70 percent of the nation's total production.

Mississippi had \$300 million in catfish sales last year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The nation's producers, who were paid a high of about 77 cents per pound in April 2000, had to accept 70 cents per pound six months later and the price is still falling, Warren said.

Producers also complain that Vietnam's costs are low because of cheap labor and weak environmental and food regulations.

Work on new science rooms coming along

REMODELING, from Page 1

the crew should be done with the demolition work this week, hauling the old material to the dump.

The classrooms and hallway will get new ceilings, floors and walls. Miller said the windows, which practically cover one wall of each classroom, will be reduced and two storage/preparation rooms will divide the three east science classrooms.

Selby said if there is enough money, the board is considering installing a central air conditioning system, eliminating heat problems at the start of the

school year. B&B Electric estimated it would cost \$4,800 to wire the building for the system, which could cost over \$10,000.

The furniture and lab stations should arrive the last week in August, Selby

said, adding that the district wants the remodeling to be finished by Aug. 15, but that's probably not going to happen.

School starts on Aug. 28, and the superintendent said the remodeling may even go past that time.

Custom cutters scramble for work

WICHITA (AP) — With an anticipated 1 million acres of wheat abandoned in Kansas, custom cutters are scrambling to find work as the harvest moves into full swing in northern Kansas.

Harvesters are sitting idle at the state

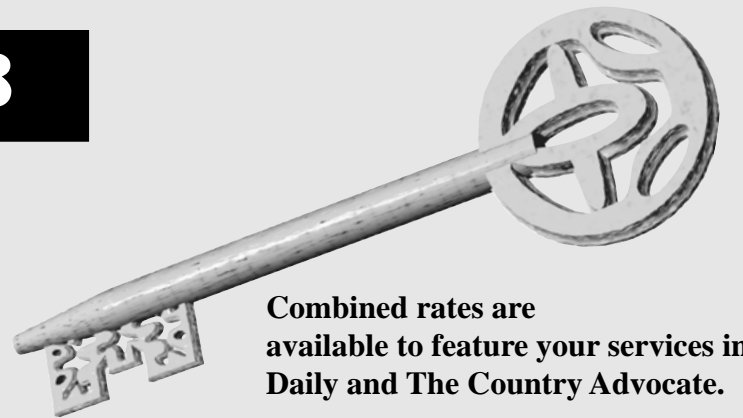
harvest office in Colby or driving the country trying to find someone that needs their wheat cut, said Roger Hale, the harvest coordinator for the area.

Each of the offices in the region has at least six harvest crews looking for acres to cut, he said.

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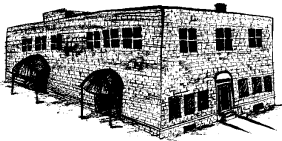
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