

# Group tours to listen about health concerns of Kansas residents

By Pat Schiefen  
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The Kansas Health Policy Authority members stopped to meet with the public with a town meeting on Tuesday and met with Goodland Chamber of Commerce members and Goodland Regional Medical Center personnel.

The four who traveled from Topeka were Executive Director Dr. Marcia Nielsen, Dr. Andy Allison, Francis Breyne and Peter Hancock. They were visiting Pittsburg, Atchison, Dodge City, Garden City to listen to the concerns about healthcare of people. Hancock said he brings rain with him when he goes to meetings. He was kidded when he was asked if he would come back when the area needs rain again.

Director Nielsen said that during the last legislative session the group learned that just giving the legislature facts and figures did not work as well by itself without the personal stories of real people.

This is the second year for the group to suggest health reforms to the legislature. Nielsen thought recording the stories of individuals



Dr. Andy Allison, Dr. Marcia Nielsen, Peter Hancock and Francis Breyne

talked about their medical costs and how they had problems with having no insurance and keeping their insurance would work better than just presenting facts and figures.

The most doable project for the group is a state law for a statewide smoking ban. This ban would not take any money from the state general fund, said Nielsen. There have been concerns that prohibiting smoking in their place of business would cause customers to go to another business in another city. This has been a sticking point for local

officials to ban smoking but a statewide ban would eliminate that.

The proposed ban would include public places; taxicabs and limousines; restrooms, lobbies, hallways and other common areas in public and private buildings, condominiums and other residential facilities; restrooms, lobbies and other common areas in hotels and motels and in at least 80 percent of rooms; and any place of employment. Places that are exempt are private homes except if used for a day care, main gaming floor of a lottery gaming

facility, Kansas veterans' home, Kansas soldiers' home, designated smoking areas of adult care homes, tobacco shops and commercial vehicles.

The penalty would be a misdemeanor with a \$100 fine for the first violation, \$200 for the second violation and up to \$500 for the third violation.

The second thing the group is proposing is an increase in the state cigarette tax of 75 cents. A 10 percent increase in the cost of a pack of cigarettes is projected to lead

to a four percent drop in tobacco use. To teens the increased cost is thought to cause a seven percent drop in smoking. Half of all Kansas smokers started smoking before they were 14. The current state tax is 79 cents on a pack of cigarettes. The average state tax is \$1.09 per pack. The federal cigarette tax is 39 cents. It is estimated that it costs 86 cents for tobacco-related illnesses of Medicaid recipients alone. The group estimates that it would raise \$68.7 million in revenues in 2010.

The group proposes that the money be spent to provide Medicaid for poor parents who earn up to federal poverty level. Improve access to affordable health insurance for small businesses and young adults, expand early detection for breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate cancer, expand the school wellness

programs from 40 to 85 school districts, wellness grants for small business and fund stop smoking programs for Medicaid recipients. Medicaid recipients according to national data suggests the rate for them is high than the general state population.

She said that small businesses are not able to offer health insurance to their employees or it is very expensive. They want to help the uninsured be responsible for their health care.

The group oversees \$2.2 billion of programs including Healthwave, Medicaid and State of Kansas employee health insurance. Healthwave provided health insurance to families with incomes that are above the Medicaid limits.



## Volleyball team goes to Colby Saturday

The Cowgirls junior varsity volleyball team competed against the Rawlins County Lady Buffaloes Tuesday, Oct. 7, in the Cowgirls' home quadrangular. The Cowgirls varsity, junior varsity and "C" teams

competed Tuesday in the Oakley triangular, and the "C" team was to compete Thursday in the Scott City quadrangular. The Cowgirls go to Colby Saturday for the Northwest Kansas League Tournament.

**Classifieds work! 899-2338**

### student of the week



Students, school sponsored trips. Favorite subject: German. Memory: Girls nights following dances, quoting movies, taking pictures and fun times during class.

**Activities involved in at school:** Mixed Chorale, AFS, Flagline, band

**My choice of movies, books, and games:** Music: anything I can sing along with such as "I'm With You" by Avril Lavigne. Movies: *Made of Honor*; *Without a Paddle*. Books: suspense, anything by Caroline B. Cooney. Games: *Taboo*; *Catch Phrase*.

**After I leave Goodland High School I intend to ...:** go to Fort Hays State University

**And 10 years from now, I think I'll be ...:** doing something I enjoy, hopefully I have traveled to Belgium, Chile and Hong Kong.

**Favorite Quote:** "Smile, it makes people wonder what you're up to."  
-Unknown

**Name:** Erica Fenner  
**Parents:** Dale and Carlene Fenner  
**Grade:** 12  
**Age:** 17

**We've nominated this student because:** Erica is motivated to achieve, conscientious about school and work, involved in organizations and personable to work with. She is one of our quiet leaders whose presence enhances the student body of Goodland High School.

**Student Comment:** Favorite aspect: getting to know Foreign Exchange

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