

Palm Sunday in the park



Members of three congregations got together for the Blessing of the Palms on Sunday morning at Chamber Park. The First United Methodist Church, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church and St. Paul's Episcopal Church have been meeting in the park for many years. Father Norbert Dlabal above is reading a passage for the service. Ann Middleton holds the book. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week for many faiths.
Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

Fair group asks for donation

By Tom Betz
nt.betz@nwkansas.com

Sherman County commissioners Tuesday heard a request for money from the Thunder on the Plains Professional Bull Riding group to help sponsor the event in August, but the commissioners delayed a decision until the next meeting on Tuesday.

Randy Whitmore of the local PBR organizing group was at the meeting to ask the county to consider continuing the \$500 the county gave last year.

He said they had a good event last year and is scraping up money for this year's event.

Commissioner Larry Enfield asked if the PBR event was going good and getting ahead on the money side.

Whitmore said they just barely flushed last year. He said the group is barely making it even as a non-profit. He said this is the fifth year and has been a PBR event for three years. He said it has picked up, but the problem is seating as they do not have enough. He said they advertised from Salina to Limon last year and hit the radio hard. He said they did sell out.

Commissioner Max Linin asked if the event would sell more tickets if there were more seats. He said maybe the group needs to look at more bleachers.

Whitmore said they have bleachers on each side, and did not see how they could increase the size of those with the arena. He said they are using the track area in front of the existing arena.

Linin said the group needs to look at raising ticket prices.

Whitmore said they had looked at that as a possibility. He said in Colorado Springs it is \$58 for their event and no one thinks about that.

Linin asked what the ticket prices are.

Whitmore said adults are \$20 and children are \$10. He said it is hard to judge what the ticket price would do. He said the motels want to see a two-day event so more people stay. He said some do stay and last year some of those who came from Salina did stay.

Enfield said based on the ticket prices and seating the event should bring in about \$50,000.

Whitmore said it was about \$52,000 last year.

Enfield asked about the costs. Whitmore said the arena costs \$2,000 and the bleachers have cost \$3,200 and are going up. He said he can't quote the price on the stock that comes in.

Enfield asked about how many seats in the bleachers.

Whitmore said he thought it was about 500.

Enfield said he wondered what it would be to buy a set of bleachers.

Whitmore said these are all hydraulic and one man can handle each section, but felt they would be very expensive for only using them once a year. He said it was tough to get them into the track area.

He said they had tried to use the arena for the open bull riding. He said it worked for a couple of years until they had a big blow out in the corrals and a couple of bulls got away.

Strnad asked Whitmore if he had talked to the economic development person.

He said he is to talk to the city commissioners on Monday. He said both the city and economic development gave \$1,000 last year.

Strnad said it would be good for Whitmore to give the county until next week to look at the budget and see what the city is going to do with economic development.

Whitmore said that would work as he was on the city agenda for Monday.

High Plains Mental Health gives update

By Tom Betz
nt.betz@nwkansas.com

The High Plains Mental Health network covers 20 counties in northwest Kansas, and has been a combined effort for more than 40 years. Sherman County commissioners heard on Tuesday with the annual report from Walt Hill, director from Hays.

Local board member Mary Pat Bowman and Health Center supervisor Tracy Hillmer accompanied Hill as he met with the commissioners to give a report of activities and talk about the county funding for next year.

Hill said the big challenge continues to be cuts in state funding. He said over recent years the state has repeatedly cut the mental health funds, and Hill said for next year Gov. Sam Brownback had suggested eliminating all mental health funding.

"We have cut positions," Hill said, "mostly through attrition, and the state cuts have pulled out the subsidy for services for those who cannot afford high fees."

Hillmer said the cent's sliding scale doesn't go down as far.

"We did not have any other choice," Hill said. "We grappled with what to do and looked at eliminating all our reserves, but did not feel that was a good thing."

"My best guess is the legislative conference committee on the budget will probably restore at least part of the funding for next year. If the state continues to cut this more people will flood into state hospitals. So it is a case of pay to keep our services going or pay for the state hospitals."

Commissioner Cynthia Strnad said the state keeps cutting the hospitals as well.

Hill said he knows the state is looking at cutting beds in a small hospital in Kansas City. He said he heard a comment from another mental health person that if the cuts continue these people will end up

in jail. He said the state has put more Medicaid money in to help make up the budget, and the state people feel this will cover the cuts. Hill said that will be a short term fix.

Commissioner Max Linin asked about the mental health clinic clients and if they have medical insurance coverage.

Hillmer said many don't have insurance.

Hill said some have coverage for services, but not for all services. He said there are different limits on many insurance plans for out patient and in patient services.

Commissioner Larry Enfield asked how the Affordable Care Act affects the mental health services.

"We really don't know," Hill said. "We may get more people, but we do not know how it will be paid. I expect we will see some rationing of care as we see with Medicaid. Mental health did not get strong support through the insurance reform, but we really don't know what to expect. The plan will be based on Massachusetts model where they had 5 to 6 percent not covered, and those tended to be those who need mental care."

Hill said it always feels like doom and gloom time when he has to report to the member counties. He said the state has to fix the budget problem, but feels mental health has been hit disproportionately. He said in Ellis County the budget has been cut more than the school district.

"We have been able to cut our budget," he said, "but we are still in the red. We have adjusted our fees and that is beginning to help."

On the county funding Hill said the High Plains board has been looking at a funding benchmark using six factors, and most counties have seen it as fair. He said Sherman County is within \$3,000 of the benchmark. Ellis has been low, he said, and has been working with them to come up closer to the benchmark. He said

Ellis has come up about \$50,000 over the past years, but remain about \$25,000 below.

He said the board did increase the base county funding by 5 percent to expand the Health Care Safe training for law enforcement and Emergency Medical Service providers. He said the program trains these people to deal with mental health situations. He said across the system they have seen more and more of these happen, and last summer there were two incidents in two counties on the same day. He said High Plains was not able to get enough staff to handle both, and decided to do more training to be able to respond to these situations and are focusing the increase in money on that program.

He said for those counties above the benchmark the board is asking them to keep that until the other counties can come up to their benchmark. He said the two counties he is concerned about are Norton and Ellis. He said the benchmark is a guide to help counties in making funding decisions. Looking at the specific information for Sherman County, Hill noted an increase in clients served last year from 275 to 303. He said it was neither good or bad, but is what it is.

Hillmer said lots of folks would have muddled through, but more are coming in because the center is there. She said the center is seeing more increase this year.

Hill said part of that is an effort to reduce the stigma for people to get mental health help.

For Sherman County the total patient care was \$406,663 with \$35,000 coming from Sherman County, \$295,288 from fees and \$76,375 was state money.

Looking at the age breakdown of the clients in Sherman County last year, Enfield said most were in the age range of 25 to 59 for 55 percent of the total (167).

The figures show in Sherman County the total is a little higher for females (162 females and 141 males) and of the total about 56 percent are for mood disorders.

Hill said they appreciate Bowman as a board member.

Strnad asked Bowman if she will remain on the board since she has retired from Golden West in the past month.

Bowman said it has been a challenging year, but felt Hill has been willing to make tough decisions. She said it seems to be a trend nationally that mental health is getting hit very hard. As to staying on the board Bowman said she has not made a decision.

Enfield said Sherman County funds mental health out of the health services sales tax.

Hill said some counties use property tax money, some use general fund money, and thanked Sherman County for the money from the sales tax.

Hill said if things really get bad — they own all of the branch offices (5) — getting rid of a branch office does not help. If we have to we would continue some presence in those locations. If the price of gas keeps going up it will make it more difficult for people to get service. Having outreach offices is very important.

Hill said he couldn't say what might happen to the centers, but said that was part of the idea of owning buildings.

Enfield asked if the group owns the treatment sites.

Hill said just the branch offices as most of the treatment offices are usually a doctor's office. We have more crisis management services, he said.

The commissioner thanked Hill, Hillmer and Bowman for their presentation.

Reception

Linda Holton is retiring from the City of Goodland High Plains Museum after 20 years.

A come and go reception will be held on April 21, 2011 from 2-3:30 p.m. at High Plains Museum. Please stop by and wish her well!

Easter Sunday Brunch Buffet



April 24 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Call For Selected Tables-785-899-2785

Ham, scramble eggs, bacon, sausage, hash browns, pancakes, biscuits & gravy, cold fruit salad & desserts & small Danish \$8.95/person \$4.95 kids 12 & under

"New Members & Guests Always Welcomed"

Sugar Hills Golf Club

6450 Rd. 16, Goodland • 785-899-2785

STATE-OF-THE-ART
Sherman
1205 Main - Phone 899-5103
TONIGHT 7 PM:
Diary of a Wimpy Kid 2 (PG)
Starts Friday 7 PM:
HOP (PG)

The Goodland Star-News
Ad Deadlines
For Tuesday papers
Friday Noon
For Friday papers
Wednesday Noon
For Country Advocate
Friday Noon
You may call the ad in to (785) 899-2338 or stop by the Star-News at 1205 Main.

PEOPLE WHO READ NEWSPAPERS ARE

STUDENTS WITH BETTER GRADES

It all starts with Newspapers

EASTER EGG HUNT!
April . 21 . 5:00 pm
Located at the Northwest Tech Student Union.

- Energy Bunny for children & bags will be provided
- Hot Dog Feed, activities, programs & games to follow the Easter egg hunt
- Drawings for a chance to win a \$500 voucher for an energy star appliance
- Do It Yourself - DIY energy efficient upgrade demonstrations
- Learn steps and benefits of a Whole House Audit

GOOD IDEA
EFFICIENCY KANSAS
Take Charge!
www.takechargekansas.org