

a look at our Welfare



More people receive help in county

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a-year payroll.
“All the money we receive stays in Sherman County,” he said. “This is something that’s good as far as Sherman County is concerned.”
Services are provided in Thomas County through Developmental Services of North-west Kansas.
Marcie Erbas, job coach secretary with the agency, said they serve seven people for vocation rehabilitation, job skills and life skills.
She said they have day services, but lack some things, like an on-site nurse.
The Social and Rehabilitation Service office in Thomas County employs 15 people while the one in Sherman employs eight, but the Thomas County office also serves Gove, Logan, Rawlins and Decatur counties.
The Goodland office serves both Cheyenne and Wallace counties, but those two have small caseloads.
Although Golden West does not provide medical care for its residents, Jensen said,

many do receive Medicaid through Social Services.
“They’re set up by Medicaid before we receive them,” he said.
In health care programs, Sherman County gets twice the benefits for roughly the same number of people, 1,054 in Sherman and 1,083 in Thomas.
For the elderly and disabled, Thomas gets \$2 million in benefits and Sherman gets \$4.25 million.
The population of people receiving health benefits in the disabled category includes Golden West clients, said Weber.

In 12 of 26 categories, Sherman received more benefits than Thomas, and not all the spending is for developmental disability clients.
Temporary assistance for families cost \$107,448 in Sherman for 80 recipients, compared to \$67,560 for 53 in Thomas.
That’s a \$39,888 difference for 27 people.
For food assistance, Sherman county received \$357,730 for 428 people and Thomas \$320,565 for 373 people.
The difference is \$37,165 for 55 people.
One hundred nineteen more people in Sherman received energy assistance totaling \$14,514.
Sherman got \$45,211 for 275 people and Thomas \$30,697 for 156.
For general assistance, Sherman had 10 people getting \$17,070 and Thomas had 7 getting \$13,813.

That’s a difference of \$3,257 for three people.
In Sherman, 18 people received \$577,448 for foster care while in Thomas eight got \$236,479.
The difference is \$340,969 for 10 people.
Sherman gets \$19,127 more for rehabilitation services, \$31,394 for physician services and \$253,761 for other medical service.
Population for the towns works out to nearly the same percentages of each age group.
But Thomas County has only 44 more people 65 years old and over, 776 more 20 to 64 and 600 more under 20 years old.
The number of younger people in Thomas reflects, among other things, students at Colby Community College.
Genie Daniels, office supervisor for the Colby Social Services office, said each person gets different benefits so it’s hard to pinpoint directly where the money goes.
“It’s their needs,” she said, adding that medical needs vary.
To qualify for rehabilitation services,

Weber said, people must meet specific requirements.
“It’s strictly based on financial ability,” she said. “It’s very low income.”
She said the difference in the counties is basically in the amount of money people make in Thomas County versus Sherman.
Kansas Department of Revenue statistics say people in Sherman County make an average of about \$3,300 less per year than in Thomas County.
The median income, or the income that occurs more often in the set of all of the incomes, in Sherman was \$4,350 less than in Thomas.
Average income for Sherman is \$24,900 and Thomas is \$28,200.
Median income for Sherman is \$32,684 and Thomas is \$37,034.
More people in Sherman, Daniels said, might be living strictly on Social Security and therefore requiring more state help.
Although the demographic differences may add up to more money here, Weber said, the major difference comes down to the larger developmental disability population in Sherman County.

Churches, food bank resources for needy

The needy in Sherman County and Thomas County aren’t limited to the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services for help.
Both counties have a Genesis program, or food bank.
Genesis in Goodland gave out over 100 food baskets at Christmas time last year and helped 78 families throughout the year.
Genesis in Colby gave out 165 baskets at Christmas and helped 585 of families throughout the year.
Both groups have a pantry set up to give food to the needy.
Wynn Duffey, president of the Genesis board in Colby, said unlike Goodland’s Genesis, people who need help in Thomas County can return to the food bank every month.
Pat Jordan, who along with her husband Clark directs Genesis in Goodland, said in Sherman, people who qualify must wait six months to receive help again.
Duffey said while Genesis is the largest aid group, many people get help elsewhere.
She said churches, the Salvation Army and individuals help the needy.
Jordan said it’s the same in Sherman County.
She said the food bank is sometimes used by families who have applied for welfare help from Social Services, but have to wait.
Duffey said she isn’t sure how many of the people receiving Genesis aid are also getting Social Services benefits.

Both agencies will occasionally help people with energy costs, too.
The Rev. Janet Hernandez, pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Goodland, said the Goodland Churches Thrift Shop is another way low income families get help here.
She said the store looks like a regular clothing store.
It get donations and sells merchandise at a reduced price.
“They do a really good job,” she said.
The store, she said, will give clothing to families who can not afford to buy things for themselves.

Education, income and race	Population	Sherman	Thomas	State
	Anglo	6,277	7,933	2,723,507
	Latino	93.8%	97.1%	86.1%
	Average income	8.4%	1.8%	7%
	Median income	\$24,900	\$28,200	\$40,100
	Per capita income	\$32,684	\$37,034	\$40,624
	Below poverty level	\$16,761	\$19,028	\$20,506
	Home ownership rate	12.9%	9.7%	9.9%
	High school diploma	68.9%	69%	69.2%
	Bachelor’s degree	86.6%	92.7%	86%
Source: Kansas Department of Revenue, 2003, and the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.				

Community leaders surprised at levels of spending for county’s needy

Community leaders had varying reactions, but most were surprised after hearing that the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Service spends nearly twice as much money in Sherman County as it does in Thomas County.
“I was just astonished at the staggering differences,” said Sherman County Clerk Janet Rumpel.
She said while welfare has a place in society to help the less fortunate, she hopes no one is abusing the system.
“There’s always going to be people who come upon hard times and need help,” she said.
Rumpel said the differences in education levels correlated with the welfare amounts points to the need for education within the programs.
She said programs should not encourage people to remain in the system by setting income caps too high for working people to get help.
She added that while some argue there aren’t enough jobs in the area, many business owners complain they can’t find good

“I just know that there is a huge need.”
-Joshua Dechant

help.
“I think the jobs are out there if people are willing to go out there and do them,” she said.
With so many variables, Rumpel said, it’s hard to nail down a cause for the welfare numbers and therefore find a solution.
She said we can start to solve the problems with education to help people be self-sufficient.
City Commissioner Joshua Dechant said he wasn’t surprised to see such high numbers.
“I just know there is a huge need,” he said.

Dechant said when he went through Leadership Sherman County, a program to help develop leaders in the community, they stopped at Golden West.
He said the group learned a lot about what they do there and how beneficial it is to the community.
“Those people are excellent,” he said.
Dechant said jobs slated to move into the community may help others who are struggling. He added the new power plants will have to hire several technical jobs including biologists and chemists.
As for help currently available, Dechant said he was surprised to find out people needing help must wait six months before applying again for food through Genesis, the community food bank.
“I thought if someone needed help,” he said, “they could go and get it.”
He added more publicity for Genesis could help them receive more donations.
Dechant said the differences in education from Sherman to Thomas Counties prob-

ably has to do with the populations.
He said the number of students attending college there could make a difference since students must complete high school before moving up.
The Rev. Janet Hernandez, pastor of the First United Methodist Church, said she always knew there were differences between the counties.
“They feel different,” she said.
She said the numbers in education, income and demographics help to explain the differences.
Hernandez said while the greater percentage of Latinos here was no surprise to her, many people don’t notice the minority groups around town.
After looking at the numbers, Hernandez suggested people in Goodland should work harder to help those in need.
“We need to be able to help people more often,” she said adding she plans to talk with Genesis, which runs out of her church, about that.
“There are a lot of people who need help more often,” she said.

The Goodland Star-News

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