

Leaders debate future prospects for health care

BY KIMBERLY BRANDT
A decline in nursing home populations prompted Decatur County commissioners to call a summit on health care last Tuesday.

Sixteen people from various agencies in the county met and decided to form a committee to look at several possibilities, including combining some services and adding some new ones.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said the county wanted to have the meeting because the counts at both the Good Samaritan Center and the Cedar Living Center are down.

Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden said the numbers have been declining for some time. When younger people leave the community, she said, they are taking their parents and grandparents with them. She said we need to decide if both homes can stay open.

She said the hospital's nursing home unit, Cedar Living Center, lost \$59,000 last year but they hope cuts made this year will cover some of the losses.

Pam Harmon, director of nursing at the hospital, said they need to know the average number of residents at both centers, how many beds each is registered for and how many beds they actually have.

The Good Samaritan Center has had a tough couple of years financially, said Director Janice Shobe. With 50 residents, she said, things are good, but when they drop to 40 it is tough. The center has 42 residents now, but in 1983 the figure was 78.

Since that time, said Mr. Unger, some of the surrounding towns have built centers and added beds. At one time, he said, a third of the people in the homes came from Nebraska.

The long-term plan for the county has to look beyond the nursing homes and include the hospital, said Mrs. Shobe.

Will there even be a hospital in 10 to 12 years? asked Mrs. Shobe. If not, then will there be residents for the homes?

The Good Samaritan building, owned by the county, is 40 to 45 years old, she said. Cedar Living Center is 20 to 30 years old. Both will need repairs.

With the amount of money needed to bring the Good Samaritan up to code, including putting in a sprinkler system and the roof, the county needs to know what direction things are going to go, said Commissioner Doyle Brown.

The center is going to need \$100,000 to \$300,000 of work, he said. That doesn't include the plumbing or the ramp outside that may have to be changed because it doesn't comply with the American Disabilities Act, said LaVern Burtis, center maintenance man.

Commissioner Brown said they are trying to get an idea of what the community is going to do in the next five to 10 years. He said it is hard to predict the future.

Have the commissioners looked at the economic impact on jobs if everything was under one umbrella? asked Gene Gallentine.

"We all know that health care is a major employer," said Commis-

sioner Unger.

What is the Good Samaritan Society, which leases the center from the county and operates it, looking at in the future? asked Ms. Grafel.

Mrs. Shobe said she talked with her boss, and as far as the rural places go, the company will do only what is best for a community. She said Good Samaritan is here at the pleasure of the county.

The management fee is 4 1/2 percent, she said, or \$6,000 a month. Salaries at Good Samaritan run around \$1 million a year, while salaries at the hospital run around \$2.4 million a year, including Cedar Living Center.

Mrs. Harmon said if the school system goes, then the hospital will go with that.

Commissioner Brown said he is concerned about the Jennings school system, saying it looks like they only have a few years left. The same thing that happened to Hernon and Jennings could happen in Oberlin. In a year, he said, Oberlin could be a Class 1A school.

If something does happen to the school system, said Mrs. Doeden, people are going to move so their kids can get a better education.

Yes, said Commissioner Brown, and no one could blame them for doing that. The question, he said, is there anything the people can do for the county. People from outside come in and do studies, but they are only telling us what has already happened.

"I don't want to sit here and let it happen to us," he said.

There are resources that the centers have, said Mrs. Shobe. Both facilities received money from the Cochran Estate. The structures are there, she said; maybe the gaps need to be filled in. Maybe the county health system needs to offer more services.

What would it take for the community to become an attractive retirement community? asked Pastor Strecker-Baseler. Maybe they need to be marketing in bigger cities.

Mrs. Doeden said she can see the county putting a lot of money in to change things and add services and wind up in the same situation. Look at Wheat Ridge Terrace, she said. The 12-unit senior apartment complex has never been full since it opened.

Marketing has been done for Wheat Ridge, she said, and it still has never been full.

Manager Marcia Lohofener said she hasn't had anyone move out of Wheat Ridge because they were unhappy, only because they need more care.

The average age of entry is 89 years old. She said people are living on their own longer.

This decision would be easy if one of the nursing homes wasn't doing its job, said Mrs. Doeden, but both are quality places.

The commissioners suggested setting up a committee to look at the idea of combining services, what has to be done at both facilities to bring up to code, jobs and other ideas the health care professionals want to look at. The committee can then report back with ideas.

Giving blood



GIVING A PINT, Decatur Community High junior Bethany Weishapl was one of several dozen people asked to give at a blood drive held at the Decatur County Hospital on Tuesday.
— Herald photo by Gary Shike

Group questions staffer

Moran aide here to talk with people

A group of people interested in health care met with one of Congressman Jerry Moran's staff members last Tuesday at the courthouse to talk about insurance costs.

Daron Jamison, constituent services representative for the congressman from Hays, met with two people who came to see him, then was asked to join a group of health care professionals and others involved in health care who were already meeting.

He said staff members travel around the 1st District and talk with people to get a feel for what is happening and what people are thinking about. The visits also give those who are having problems with government agencies a chance to get some answers.

Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden said that here the group was interested in health care. Mr. Jamison said Congressman Moran has more hospitals in his district than any other member of congress, and he has visited most of them. He said they are working on increasing Medicare reimbursement, getting Medicaid and Medicaid administrators out to this area and a bill that would allow small businesses to join together to get health insurance.

There are a lot of people who can't pay their medical bills, he said, because they don't have insurance.

Elsie Wolters said she has heard a lot of young people don't have health insurance because they can't afford it.

There are a lot of people who don't have anything, whether it is insurance or Medicaid, said Mr. Jamison. They are slipping through the cracks. He heard a news report that the cost of malpractice insurance for doctors and hospitals is through the roof. It sounds like some doctors may quit because of it, he said.

In Kansas, said Mr. Jamison, there are state laws that help protect doctors and bring insurance costs down. The Medical Liability Reform Bill just passed the House. If it passes the Senate, he said, it could be a step in the right direction.

Gene Gallentine said he didn't have a question but wanted Mr. Jamison and Congressman Moran to keep in mind that the drought here is really starting to hurt everyone, including Main Street businesses.

It seems for the last four to five years, the drought has put people in a crunch in Northwest Kansas, said Mr. Jamison, but if it doesn't change they won't be here at all next year.

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Graduates receive scholarship

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Two new Oberlin graduates have been added to the Col. Delbert Townsend scholarship program.

Kelsey Dorshorst and Allie Moore have been selected to receive the scholarship, which pays for everything for four years at Kansas State University and provides each student with a computer.

Miss Dorshorst said she plans to major in sociology or psychology, and may end up with a double major.

Miss Moore said she plans to major in biology in the pre-health professions and would like to become a pediatrician.

Col. Townsend, a 1938 graduate of Decatur Community High School, started the program in Nebraska with students in Red Willow County going to the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

He expanded the program here with K-State. Col. Townsend said the pipeline is now full, meaning that there are students in every level from freshmen to seniors at the university with the help of this scholarship.

He was born on a farm near Danbury to hard working parents.

"As a product of the great depression," he said, "I thoroughly understand the meaning of hard times."

In those days, he said, money wasn't an obstacle. He said he only needed a quarter every once in a while for a haircut, five cents of which was returned to him to buy an ice cream cone.

Col. Townsend said at the dinner at The Gateway last Wednesday that he was sure the girls had heard many stories about the Texas oil tycoon



K. Dorshorst



A. Moore

Paul Getty. The man, worth billions, died in 1976 at the age of 83.

At the height of his success, said Col. Townsend, people asked Mr. Getty for advice.

He told them get up early, work hard and strike oil. He said he could give the girls the same advice except replace the oil part with, "get a good education."

In the last few years, the U.S. economy has been in a near free fall, he said, and his scholarship fund depends on investments. It has not been immune to the downturn, and he has no control over the amount disbursed.

Joe Montgomery with K-State; Candy Dejmaj, a high school teacher who served on the selection committee; and Krickit Steinmetz received honorary Townsend scholar plaques.

Mr. Montgomery, said Col. Townsend, has worked on the program for the KSU Foundation since the beginning. He helped with publication of the Townsend scholarship booklet and has helped publicize the scholarship over the years.

Mrs. Dejmaj received an honorary award for the work she has done on the Red Devil web site announcement of the award. Miss Steinmetz was honored for putting the web

Stearman Fly-in next month

The 22nd Annual Stearman Fly-In will be held on Saturday and Sunday, June 12 and 13, at the Cheyenne County Airport.

Activities will be held throughout the day on Saturday and on Sunday

morning. Breakfast and lunch will be served on the field. There is no admission charge; all airplanes are welcome.

For details, call (785) 332-2251 or go to www.StearmanFlyIn.org.

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• 11:30 Basketball Free Throw Contest (Grades 3-5 & 6-8) •
1 p.m. Kiddie Tractor Pull • 2:30 p.m. Barrel Roll Competition
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Man found with drugs

Hays police officers said they recovered a stolen lycra bra, two thongs, some plastic anchors and two bottles of salsa when they arrested a Decatur County man in April for shoplifting at Wal-Mart.

After a search, they also charged him with suspicion of possession of methamphetamine and felony possession of drug paraphernalia.

Mark Fraker, a 1974 Decatur County High School graduate, was arrested on Saturday, April 10, in Hays. He posted bond on Monday, April 12.

The police report lists five offenses: possession of drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia, theft, battery against a Wal-Mart employee and obstructing legal process or official duty.

Sgt. Blaine Dryden of the Hays Police said the report in the case is

under review by the county attorney. He said he was not allowed to comment on the case.

Assistant County Attorney Dave Basgall said the case was under review and no charges have been filed yet.

Asked if there were other names associated with the case, Mr. Basgall said he couldn't comment on them. He said it might be two or three weeks before any announcement is made in the case.

Items seized in the case included a Ruger P89 9mm handgun, .13 of a gram of a substance police believe is methamphetamine, a meth pipe, meth smoking pipe, a snort tube and a small butane torch.

The report indicated that copies had been sent to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and the county attorney.

Urgent news for people who have used WELDING RODS

Scientists report that elevated manganese exposure from welding rod fumes has been associated with Parkinsonism (like Parkinson's disease) and manganism. Symptoms include shakiness, distorted facial expression, loss of equilibrium, decreased hand agility, difficulty walking, joint pain, loss of short term memory, slurred/slow speech, stiffness in muscles and tremors. If you have experienced any of these problems, call us today toll free at 1-800-THE-EAGLE for a free consultation to evaluate your potential claim. We practice law only in Arizona, but associate with lawyers throughout the U.S.

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