

Senator talks about health care at town meeting in St. Francis

Sen. Stan Clark was in St. Francis and Bird City on Saturday with Rep. John Faber and Attorney General Phill Kline for a public meeting. One of the topics he touched on was health care.

In a recent publication, the senator talked about Medicaid and how it was the largest health care program in American serving 51 million people with the annual cost of \$280 billion. This dollar increases from 8 to 13 percent annually.

It provides health care coverage to one in four children; pays for 37 percent of all deliveries; and over 50 percent of all mental health care. Forty-four percent of all federal grants to states are through the Medicaid program and 17 percent of the dollars spent for health care in America is paid by Medicaid.

Medicaid serves 11 million more people than Medicare. Within five years at the current growth rate, Medicaid will be larger than the retirement benefits paid by Social Security.

If state budgets would increase tax receipts by 5 percent annually and Medicaid costs continue to increase at the current rate, by 2020, Medicaid will consume the entire budget of every state in the union.

"Doing nothing is not an option," the senator said.

Last fiscal year, Medicaid costs in Kansas were \$1,561,529,097 which is an increase of \$61 million over the fiscal year 2002 which saw an increase of \$221 million over the 2001 fiscal year.

"I have the opportunity to outline 14 specific initiatives for the Legislature to consider but I emphasize that only when we address health insurance costs and assist families in its purchase do we start to take the pressure off the Medicaid system," he said. "Medicaid has to exist as a safety net. Our state has to be an aggressive advocate for some of these health coverage options."

One of these options is Health Savings Accounts. These accounts are part of the Medicare reform measure that passed Congress last November. Essentially they operate under the theory that an individual

should have a financial stake in spending their health care dollars.

To accomplish this goal, a higher deductible health insurance policy is purchased to cover catastrophic medical needs and annual contributions to the Health Savings Accounts are limited to 100 percent of the deductible or up to \$2,600 for an individual or \$5,150 for a family.

Contributions are tax-exempt to both the employer and the employee, they are portable and will help families pay for routine medical expenses during the year, to pay premiums on long-term care insurance policies, for health insurance policies when a person is between jobs and provide a tax-preferred means of saving for future health care needs.

At the time a person retires, any unpaid sick or vacation time can be put into this account tax free to pay future Medicare premiums.

"I have suggested to the governor and to Legislative leaders that this concept should be an option for participants in the Kansas State Em-

ployees Health Plan. My family would jump at this option because my wife and son have always had a separate individual, high-deductible health insurance policy," he said.

This year, the president is proposing to establish refundable tax credits of up to \$1,000 for individuals and encourage the active marketing of these accounts. However, the first mandatory dollar coverage that currently exists on some health care policies will need to be removed.

"The individual has to have a personal stake in the costs of their health care," Sen. Clark said. "The responsibility is just as great for the wise use of health care dollars on the family with a Blue Cross-Blue Shield health insurance plan as it is on a Medicaid recipient."

"We have to inject a strong dose of responsibility and there has to be tangible consequences to those choices which encourage long-term changes in our individual health and relieve the demands placed on our safety net, the Medicaid system."

Student attends summit

Ailysa Carpenter, a junior at Cheylin High School, will travel to Washington, D.C., to attend the Presidential Classroom Future World Leaders Summit during March 20-27.

Presidential Classroom, the leader in civic education, provides the best and brightest high school juniors and seniors unprecedented access to the leaders who shape America's public policy. Participants representing more than 30 countries will explore international relations, diplomacy and the changing world economy.

During the week-long program, Presidential Classroom scholars interact with Washington insiders, including Members of Congress, presidential appointees, senior military officials, top business leaders and journalists.

Students will conduct a summit meeting to debate international issues with peers from around the world and play the World Trade Game. They also visit the renowned sites of our nation's capital such as the White House (by special invitation), the United States Capitol, The United



Carpenter

States Department of State and Arlington National Cemetery.

Presidential Classroom is a non-profit, nonpartisan education organization which was established in 1968. Former Congressman Jack Buechner is the Chief Executive Officer and President of Presidential Classroom.

"Our students meet and question the people who make and shape our nation's policies," said Mr. Buechner, "...Our students return home with a new perspective on American politics and the world."

For more information on Presidential Classroom visit the Web site: www.presidentialclassroom.org.

Bowling News

Ladies Nite Out 3/4

Team standing: Stockman's Strikers 26-10, Jersey Maids 21-15, Mel's Gals 21-15, Great Plains Coop 18-18, Wright Carpet 17-19, Cheyenne Bowl 16-20, Alley Cats 15-21, Dundy Ag Service 10-26

High game (scratch): Tammy Drommond 215, Jenny Wright 184, Boots Peterson 174

High series (scratch): Wright 502, Terry Yost 498, Nancy Vernon 488

Wednesday Coffee 2/25

Team standing: Snyder's Hay Gals 22-10, Flower Magic 21-11, Haigler Babes 18-14, Cheyenne Bowl 17-15, Dairy King 14-18, Windmill Restaurant 13-19, Krien's Steel Buildings 12-20, Sam's Electric 11-21

High game (scratch): Tammy Zimelman 197, Shirley Adkinson 189, T. Zimelman 187



KORI COUNTS! Miss. Underwood tallies change during class time in the home economics room.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

Classes scheduled for storm spotters

Spring is almost upon us, and once again the National Weather Service office in Goodland will offer Basic Storm Spotter training classes. The Cheyenne County class will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 29, at the St. Francis Community High School.

- Other classes will be held:
- Sherman County, 7 p.m., March 17, Goodland Armory (location tentative).
 - Thomas County, 7 p.m., March 24, Colby Community Building.
 - Rawlins County, 7 p.m., April 5, Prairie Development Center, Atwood.
 - Dundy County, 7 p.m. mountain standard time on April 22 at the Benkelman High School (location tentative).

Each class will discuss severe weather on the High Plains, severe weather safety at home, school and work, as well as provide an in-depth look at severe storm spotting and reporting procedures. Classes are free and open

to all age groups.

Anyone interested in becoming a storm spotter or simply learning more about severe weather on the High Plains is invited to attend. Each session will last 2 hours, 15 minutes.

Spotter training will begin in mid-March and continue throughout the tri-state area into late April. The spotter class schedule will also be updated daily on our web page at: <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/gld>. Beginning in early March, all NOAA Weather Radio transmitters in the area will have the latest spotter training schedule playing at regular intervals throughout the day.

At this time, there are no plans to host an Advanced Spotter Class in 2004. Advanced Spotter classes will be offered again in the spring of 2005.

Kansas Severe Weather Awareness Week is March 15 through 19 with the tornado drill to be held on March 16 at 10:30 a.m.

Athlete attends national indoor competition

Colby Community College

Several athletes from Colby Community College qualified to attend the National Junior College Athletic Association Indoor Track and Field championships on March 5 and 6 in Manhattan. Joy Zumbahlen, Cheylin graduate, competed in the triple jump, where she placed eighth with a distance of 31 feet, 9.5 inches.

Only the top in the nation can compete in this meet. So just going is a great accomplishment.

"This meet ends what was a good

indoor season," the Colby coach said. "I am very proud of the team as they overcame a lot this season and represented Colby Community College in a positive manner. We will now get ready for our outdoor season."

Barton County placed first in both the men's and women's division at Manhattan. Colby finished 22nd in the women's division.

Academic All-American
Zumbahlen has been awarded National Junior College Academic All-American for cross country.

Club Clip

AARP Day at the Capitol

About 500 seniors from across the state of Kansas traveled to Topeka on Wednesday, Feb. 18, to make their presence known for AARP Advocacy Day at the Capitol.

Eight attending from Cheyenne County were Annette Erskin, district coordinator, Wilma Lampe, ErvaGene DeAragon, Bud Houtman, Gladys Cullum, Bob and Bobbi Poorman and Norma Butcher.

The main topics being addressed were "Affordable Prescription Drugs" and "Long-Term Care/Home and Community Based Services" for older Kansans. Senate Bills 458 and 459 address these issues.

AARP members feel that providing services to help keep seniors in their homes longer would be very cost effective and keep them happier and better satisfied as well.

The keynote address was given by Governor Kathleen Sebelius, and there were also talks by other dignitaries.

Nine buses were sent out to bring members from across the state as well as many arriving by car. All were given a red AARP T-shirt to wear making a "sea of red" as they were unloaded at the State Capitol building first.

The Cheyenne County group called on the office of Senator Stan Clark and also on Representative John Faber, where there was time for a short discussion and a photo op.

All members were then bused to the Ramada Inn ball room for lunch and the speeches of the Governor and others plus some presentations.

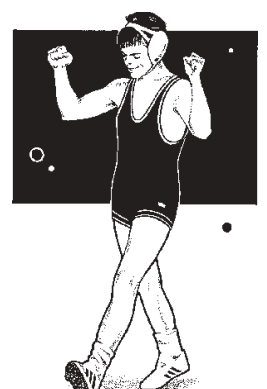
The northwest Kansas bus them loaded and left for Hays where all transferred to their cars to return home.

It was a very busy but informative and productive day.

Wrestlers compete

Two Cheylin wrestlers competed at the kids tournament sponsored by the Wray Wrestling Club on Saturday, March 6 in Wray. Wrestlers beginning at age 6 and ending with age 14 were placed in age plus weight brackets for the day.

Derek Vandike competed in the 6-and-under division, 37 pounds, and placed fourth, while Casey Vandike competed in the 8-and-under division, 52 pounds, and also placed fourth.



Club Clip

American Legion Auxiliary
The American Legion Auxiliary met on Friday, March 5. There were 17 members present.

A video about the White House was played for the program. The film was very informative and showed many of the changes that have taken place from the time it was built through the time of former President George Bush. It was interesting and showed many of the artifacts and historical items from the White House and the nation's past.

At the close of the meeting the members had a good time visiting while they ate the delicious refreshments prepared by Darlene Burr and Carol Brubaker.

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