

Hospital has centralized billing

The Cheyenne County Hospital has partnered with Great Plains Health Alliance Centralized Billing office. The new billing began operations Nov. 1 out of Hays.

"We are excited to enter into this partnership with Great Plains Health Alliance's centralized billing for many reasons: first and foremost, the billing is located in Kansas," said Les Lacy, chief executive officer for the hospital.

The hospital will enter the centralized billing environment on Jan. 1.

"We are always looking for ways to gain efficiencies, so we started researching the centralized billing concept.

"Our livelihood depends on patient satisfaction, so we started looking for a local solution. Since Great Plains has been in the business of leasing and managing hospital for over 50 years, it made sense to look at the Alliance for a solution," he said.

"Great Plains Health Alliance has been brainstorming for a couple of years about developing an in-house centralized billing office. With the complexities of healthcare billing and the need for standardization in hospitals, Great Plains made the decision to move forward with the

billing product. We are very proud of our product and are excited to enter into a new venture with our partners in health care."

There will be changes as with any new business. The most notable will be follow up on patient responsibility balances, Mr. Lacy said.

The centralized billing office will follow up on private pay accounts, ensuring minimum payments are being made on all account balances. The billing staff will work to set payments that are manageable for patients, while at the same time, meet cash-flow needs of the hospital.

"Another change is the design of our statements," Mr. Lacy said.

Currently guarantors receive one statement comprising the total family balance. Unfortunately, with this approach, accounts tend to "fall through the cracks," he said.

Guarantor statements, while convenient on the surface, rely on manual processes to monitor payment activity. With the new billing comes automation.

Datamailers will be generated daily so that once a balance becomes the patient responsibility, a statement will be mailed. Since datamailers are generated based on individual accounts, it is possible

for one patient to receive multiple statements.

Patients have the ability to combine account balances by setting up payment arrangements and signing a promissory note. Once a promissory note has been signed, the person responsible for the account will be issued a coupon book, statements will no longer be mailed.

It is important to note that new promissory notes must be signed in order to combine future balances," Mr. Lacy said.

Transitioning to the new statements may be a little confusing for patients in the beginning, but we are committed to make this transition as smooth as possible."

The staff at the hospital is working to combine accounts prior to sending new datamailers. Letters will be mailed to notify guarantors of these transactions.

"The Cheyenne County Hospital is committed to provide quality service from patient care to patient billing, Mr. Lacy said. "We are confident this new change will add to our quality.

Questions regarding the new centralized billing can be answered by calling the hospital at 785-332-2104.



CHEYLIN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS Samaritan Village during the Christmas caroling for the residents at St. Francis Good holiday.

Commissioners talk about new 911 emergency system

By Karen Krien

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Carol Gamblin, the county communication director, told the Cheyenne County Commissioners on Monday, that the new 911 system was going well.

She said that they had started on Wednesday, Dec. 19, and the four dispatchers, Jim Rarick, Steve Nolan, Jennifer Padgett and Sam Beeson were doing very well.

They had found that there will need to be something put on the ceiling to help with the acoustics because of the echoing in the room and there is some more electrical work to be done. Additional equipment for monitoring weather and training will be purchased in the near future.

Andy Beikman, chairman, asked where people should call if they are going to have a controlled burn? Mrs. Gamblin said they can call 785-332-8880 or 911. People planning a burn should not only call before they start but when it is finished.

Craig Van Allen, sheriff, had also come with Mrs. Gamblin for the report. He said that, if there is money left in the department's equipment budget, he would like to purchase a shotgun. He will check on the amount before it is purchased.

Emergency medical service report

Janelle Bowers, emergency medical service director, said there were 28 ambulance runs in November but so far, there were less runs in December. The adjustment (write-offs) for November was \$1,099.

Mrs. Bowers said the microphone/speaker system in the back of the ambulance isn't working. She and the commissioners talked about what could be done to correct it. They suggested she call Prairie States, Imperial, to see if the equipment can be repaired and, if not, see what it will cost to replace it. They said to go with whatever is the cheapest but to get it fixed.

Mrs. Bowers said she had been contacted to see if the county would be interested in sending people to an

emergency medical technician class in Idalia. If there was enough interest, a class may be held.

She said there were two St. Francis people and one from Rawlins County. Of course, Rawlins County would pay the cost for its trainee.

Mrs. Bowers said she had enough money left in her budget at the end of the year to order a laptop computer. She also wanted to order a full-body mannequin. The commissioners said she needed to order the laptop that day and Terry Miller, clerk, said he would give her the necessary information.

The commissioners had several inquiries as to what the county was going to do with the old emergency medical service building on U.S. 36 when the new emergency building is finished? At the meeting, they agreed that they would wait until the service was out of the building.

Appraiser's office report

Bonnie Zwegardt and Deb Smith, both representing the appraiser's office, talked about the new aerial maps for the 911 system. Mrs. Zwegardt said that there is not enough memory on their present computer to handle the size of the maps. They have sufficient money to purchase a new computer and monitor costing \$1,875. They said the computer is still a very good computer and suggested someone in the courthouse might be able to use it.

They suggested the commissioners stop by their office to look at the new aerial slides.

"They are amazing," Mrs. Zwegardt said.

They then turned to discussing mileage vouchers. They had talked to the auditor about the documentation on the vouchers. They explained that if they used parcel numbers, the vouchers would be more accurate and there would be less paperwork and the commissioners could see exactly where they had been if there was a question.

Mr. Beikman said if the auditor had been agreeable to listing parcels, then it was all right with him. He said that they were just following the auditor's instructions in making sure the vouchers were filled out correctly.

They went on to say that this time of year, they will be driving the entire county for final review. Noting that there are around 4,000 parcels in the county. When they are doing the review in Bird City and St. Francis, it takes a lot of gas and, at gas prices today, they are not coming out even.

Mr. Beikman suggested that the county purchase a vehicle for the appraiser's office to use and just put the gas in. That way there would be no worry about mileage vouchers. The women said that the last appraiser's vehicle was very unreliable and, in truth, it was probably cheaper for the county to pay mileage. There was no decision made on the matter of mileage while in the city limits. The mileage paid is \$.40 per mile.

Both Mrs. Zwegardt and Mrs. Smith said they will need to go to required classes in the future. The commissioners agreed that they should attend. They also asked if Kathy Graf, who was recently hired as full-time office help with the intention of eventually having her trained to be the appraiser, should be attending the class. The women said she was probably not ready for this type of training and suggested they call Randy Sangster, appraiser, for his recommendation.

Emergency manager's report

Gary Rogers, emergency manager, was concerned about having the right equipment for his office in the new emergency building. He said his office will need some radio equipment, along with the wiring and antenna. He estimated the cost to be around \$1,000 and wondered if it could be taken out of the 911 Fund. The commissioners agreed that it could as the funds are to be used for

capital improvements, installations and startup costs — The proposed equipment is for communications and new equipment.

Mr. Beikman suggested that there be a means to add wiring later on. Mr. Rogers said those working on the new building have already looked seriously at every angle. While there will need to be a ceiling in the hall, a false ceiling will also be put in place where additional wiring can be run and it will be easy to access. He also noted that the architect had only called for four electrical outlets in his room (one on each wall). He said that he had installed more as by the time all the equipment has been plugged in, he will need more than four outlets.

In other business

In other business: •Deputy clerk, Deb Lindsten, who is in charge of the cafeteria health plan, was allowed \$7 per each employee per month. She will be paid approximately \$150 each month.

•Mary Morrow, register of deeds, asked that Carol Whipple be deputized and her pay raised to the next level (level 2). The commissioners agreed.

•Jane Young, Bird City, was appointed as the new hospital board member, taking the seat of Swede Calnon, who retired after serving eight years. See related article.

•Cody Beeson, representing the Bird City Fire Department, said their vehicle used for carrying emergency equipment had a transmission leak. The commissioners said to get several bids. He also asked that the department be allowed to purchase several more grass masks as there are

not enough for each of the firemen. Again, the commissioners said to get some prices but order them on next year's budget.

•Susan Roelfs, county health nurse, had a Pandemic Influenza Contract for the commissioners to sign. The grant is for \$5,010 and runs until August 2008.

•At the end of the meeting, it was

noted that the General Fund was over budget. However, it was because of unexpected health care costs and adjustments will be made.

Next meeting

The next meeting is tentatively set for 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 15, in the commissioners' room in the courthouse.

First baby to receive gifts

By Karen Krien

The first of the year is here and the contest for the First Baby of the Year 2008 has begun. The contest began Tuesday and will end when the first phone call comes in and the baby/parents meet the rules of the contest.

Actually, there is only one requirement and that is the baby must be born to parents living in Cheyenne County for one month or more. These parents and their new-born infant will be awarded gifts from sponsors.

The *Saint Francis Herald* office must be notified as soon as possible following the birth. The *Herald's* number is 785-332-3162 or call 785-332-3246.

The parents of this year's first baby will receive a \$25 gift certificate from St. Francis Super's, a \$50 bond from Western State Bank, a \$50 bond from First National Bank, Bird City/St. Francis, a baby photo album or frame from Schultz's, a baby gift from Owens True Value,

a baby gift from Krien Pharmacy, two bottles of champagne from Burr Liquor, and a year's subscription to *The Saint Francis Herald* or *Bird City Times*.

The first baby of the year will also receive a special quilt from the Prairie Piecemaker Quilt Guild, Goodland. Bonnie McQuillen, member, said the quilt may be picked up at *The St. Francis Herald* office.

The parents of the new baby will need to pick up their gifts or claim their services within 60 days after the birth.

Since most babies are not on schedule, it's hard telling when the first baby of 2008 will be born.

2007 First Baby of the Year

Josh and Sara Sowers and their daughter were the winners of the First Baby of the Year. Adrianna Joy was born at 1:25 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 10, in their home 15 miles northeast of Bird City. Adrianna weighed 6 pounds and was 18 3/4-inches long. She has a sister, Eliana.

Logan County Hospital

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"Murder Can Be Habit-Forming"

Sunday, Jan. 6, 2008 • 3 p.m.
St. Francis Community High School

Auditions are for adults only:
•9 Females •7 Males

Production Dates: March 15-16, 2008
Rehearsals begin Feb. 11, 2008

A percentage of the proceeds to be donated to the high school drama/music department
Production of
On Stage, Inc.