

Birthday celebrated

This month Helen Howk celebrated her 90th birthday twice, once with her daughter, Merla Rae and husband, Mike Hoffman and daughter, Beth, Colorado Springs, Colo., and the second time with the Sweazy sisters.

Merla Rae, Mike and Beth gave Helen a new computer for her birthday. It was a great time since everyone's birthdays were close together.

On Friday and Saturday, Melissa Dauber (Sweazy) and daughter, Aubrey of Garden City, Kristin Corey (Sweazy) of St. Louis, Ill., Stacey Boline (Sweazy) and son Benjamin of Gardner, Michelle Ayers (Sweazy) of Lyndon and their mother Barbara, arrived and surprised Mrs. Howk by mowing and cleaning up her yard.

Their father, Robert Sweazy, was a teacher at Bird City High, then Cheylin, 1955 through 1986. Their older sister, Kate was not able to come, but she was just two weeks old when her father and mother moved to Bird City.

After all the work was done,



THE SWEAZY girls clean up Helen Howk's yard for her birthday.

conversation and laughter filled the house as everyone shared stories of their life in Bird City and Mrs. Howk sitting around her dining room table. Stacey talked about Mrs. Howk tying her umbilical cord and each sister had a fond memory of Helen.

Meals were planned and prepared by Aubrey.

Another visitor was Roy Shrader of Bird City, who knew the sisters growing up and talked about how they all would work and sing together, with that, they all pulled weeds,

mowed and sang "Swing low, Sweet Chariot." Mr. Shrader, his wife, Karen and children, Colleen and Grant live in the home the Sweazy family grew up in, and when in town, the Shrader family invites them over to see the old homestead.

Commissioners discuss hospital budget

By Karen Krien
karen.k@nwkansas.com

The hospital board and administrator were present at the Cheyenne County Commissioners' meeting to discuss the hospital's allocations, budget and audit when they met on Monday.

Les Lacy, hospital administrator, Joy Anderegg and Jerry Toler, board members, presented the audit results for the hospital and asked that the commissioners continue to support them, asking for \$650,000 which was a \$125,000 increase. The hospital received a \$50,000 increase.

Mr. Lacy said the hospital had a "clean audit."

In 2006, the hospital had a good year. In 2007, there were changes in the medical staff, adding Dr. Rebecca Allard to help Dr. Mary Beth Miller. Also through the year, they hired Kim Zwegardt, anesthesiologist, full time.

Commissioner Ernie Ketzner, asked why there was a \$400,000 jump from one year to the next?

Mr. Lacy said that was when they had added a second physician, the certified registered nurse anesthetist, two physician assistants and there was a 3-percent increase for the staff. There was also a contract renewal for Dr. Miller.

He said this year, the hospital will face another high loss. Right now, he said, our volume doesn't support the physician load. Our way out is to develop volume and services in our community and other areas. The hospital has a very stable practice here, he said, and we are drawing from surrounding communities.

He said the hospital did not receive the tax credits he had applied for. The credit was to help remodel the obstetrics room.

He also said the kitchen needs to be remodeled and he has applied for

a Community Block Development Grant.

The east entrance to the building didn't pass the fire marshal code. The head clearance is 2-inches too low, the concrete is crumbling and the concrete approach is needing to be replaced. When this work is done, they will be looking at additional parking on the east side.

He said the hospital has space-related issues when the speciality doctors are there. He will have an architect do a drawing on ways of gaining additional space.

We need to meet the needs of the community, he said.

In the future, he said the hospital will need a new CAT scanner.

We have been conservative, Mr. Lacy said, using wise spending. We are at a position right now that, with increased losses anticipated, we are training our own crew so we do not have to use locum staff. That is the

reason we are asking for additional funds.

Mr. Toler said that, in the past several year, the board has been able to advance and move forward.

"We are in a pivotal position," he said. We now need to continue to look forward and not lose ground — we don't want to take things away.

"I am concerned that we won't be able to continue if there are more budget cuts."

He went on to say the hospital is very professional — our peers say so, he said. We need to be able to handle volumes as well as emergencies — anything that comes our way, he said, adding that there are a lot of hidden costs and we are constantly being challenged.

Mr. Lacy introduced Mila Bandel, registered nurse, who will be working part time as the health nurse and part time on the floor at the hospital.

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