

# County may get help to deal with insurance

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County commissioners may hire an outside group to help them get a better deal on the county's insurance plan.

Dennis Lister and Janet Willis with CBIZ Benefits and Insurance Services, a consulting firm, explained some of what their company does.

Mr. Lister said the normal process is to do a strategic plan for the county's health insurance.

They will look through the county's data and that of Blue Cross Blue Shield, the county's insurance provider.

"Our goal is to get you the best deal," Mr. Lister said.

"We're used to working with insurance companies to get this accomplished."

The second part is to look for competition. That way, he said, they can either negotiate with Blue Cross or change to a better provider.

Ms. Willis said once they have the information, they can begin to look at getting the county what it needs.

Another part of their job is to make sure the employees are happy. If the county's employees have questions or problems, they can call CBIZ.

County Commissioner John Miller said they had dealt with a third party on insurance before and had a better plan than they do now, but the employees became unhappy, feeling that they were getting the third degree.

He said they needed to tell the employees about what was going on.

"We want to let our employees know why you're out here," Mr. Miller said.

"That way they know. It's always better to tell them directly than to have them hear something through the grapevine.

"We want them to know that we're not, at this point, changing their insurance and to let them know why you're here."

Mr. Lister said it will take about four months to get an idea of what is going to be needed for the county.

He said CBIZ has a 30-day contract, that way if their clients aren't happy, services can be stopped.

Mr. Miller said the company's fees are reasonable and that the county doesn't have the expertise to handle something like this. He said it would be a full-time job just to keep up.

He said the biggest thing they are looking for is to slow the cost

increases. County Commissioner Leroy Lang said the county's goal is to save money.

Mr. Lister said that is the company's goal. He said they couldn't guarantee that they would always be able to save money, but if they didn't, then the county didn't have to retain their services.

"The short contract time seems to be the best way to guarantee our work," Mr. Lister said.

"But I think we have some pretty good references saying that we've been pretty good about saving our clients money."

Because Commissioner Dean Kruse went home sick and wasn't at the meeting, the commissioners couldn't make anything official. CBIZ was recommended by the Saline County commissioners.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Heard from Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Alvin Mapes about the county's Mitigation 20/20 plan.

Mr. Mapes said the plan was finished and needs to be approved. The commissioners need to look at the finished copy before they can approve anything.



Father Vincent Thu Laing led his congregation into the church just before the Palm Sunday services at the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. Each parishioner carried a palm, which was blessed earlier. — Telegram photo by Veronica Monier

## Commissioners look at future bridge projects

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

On March 22, the Norton County commissioners discussed road improvements with Steve Berland of BG Consulting.

"You guys know you always get a bridge a year," Mr. Berland said, in discussing the county's five-year bridge plans.

There are several highway projects planned over the next few years, which will include bridge work on state highways and Norton County has issued bonds to repair up to 25 bridges on county roads.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Learned that the Kansas Supreme Court did not rule on the county's suit regarding regulations for animal confinement operations.

- Agreed with Sheriff Troy Thomson that the county shouldn't hold prisoners for the Kansas Department of Corrections because of the problems involved with such prisoners and the lack of space in the county jail.

- Heard that the sheriff needs to hold evacuation exercises at the jail at least four times a year according to the state jail inspector.

However, Sheriff Thomson said, the dispatchers cannot help because they are not trained as jailers and are not allowed to open any of the doors in the jail.

- Were told that the sheriff has asked for bids for two new patrol cars. The sheriff has asked for bids from at least six dealers including the two in town.

- Talked to Dan Sturgill and Rich Miller about High Plains Mental Health.

The men said that the group would be asking for the same amount of money as last year from the county.

- Held a public meeting and passed a resolution to accept amendments to the Northwest Kansas Solid Waste Authority Solid Waste Management Plan.

Information on the resolution and the county's solid waste plan are available at the county clerk's office.

- Were told that the windows planned for the shed at the recycling center were to be cut and Plexiglass installed while the three solid waste employees were at a household hazardous waste meeting in Lindsborg.

## Rural Telephone names development specialist

Tony Poore, Hill City, has been named the economic development and networking manager for Rural Telephone.

"This newly created position will enable us to put an even greater emphasis on strengthening the vitality of the communities it serves through both business and education," said Rural's General Manager Larry Sevier.

"Rural Telephone understands that our success depends on the success of our communities," Mr. Poore said. "If communities lose jobs, schools and residents, we lose customers. But it's more than the bottom line. The employees of Rural Telephone love living in western Kansas and genuinely want strong communities where their families can go to school and to work. We want to export the products and services we sell, not our children. We need our communities to offer a good life for the people who live here and want to stay."

Mr. Poore said he plans to work with the Norton civic and business leaders and to keep in touch with the county commissioners, city council, Norton Rural and Economic Development and busi-

nesses.

Mr. Poore will help them find ways to grow, such as using loans and grants.

Mr. Poore has his work cut out for him.

Since 1970, population has declined in all but two northwest Kansas counties. Recognizing this, Rural Telephone started an Economic Development department more than a decade ago with a revolving loan fund to provide start-up money for businesses in northwest Kansas.

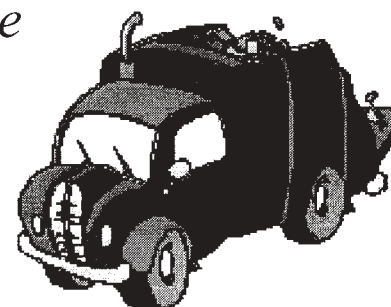
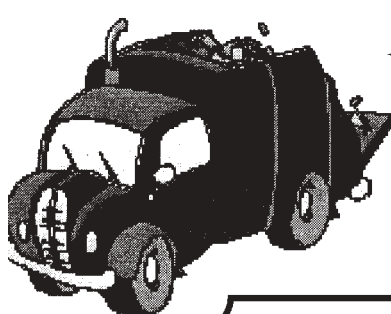
Mr. Poore's job will be to help businesses. Rural Telephone feels businesses have a better chance to stay competitive if they are able to use technology offered by the cooperative and Nex-Tech.

Mr. Poore will oversee Rural Telephone's participation in Kan-Ed, a statewide network that gives students increased educational opportunities. He will manage Rural Telephone's Revolving Loan Fund, and keep up with legislation that may affect economic development.

Mr. Poore has served Rural Telephone for 30 years, most recently as plant manager of their outside plant.

# CITY-WIDE CLEAN-UP

*Spring Clean-up is a free service provided by the City of Norton.*



*If individuals choose to take items to the landfill themselves, normal county fees will apply.*

**Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>**

**City Trucks will make special trash pickup during these days. Please put all of your items out by 8 a.m. on your regular route day.**

**THE ONLY ITEMS TO BE PUT IN THE ALLEY ARE METALS AND TREE LIMBS. NO OTHER ITEMS WILL BE PICKED UP IN THE ALLEY!**

**All types of trash will be picked up on your regular trash route day EXCEPT yard waste, tires, refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, household hazardous waste and construction debris.**

**(Tree limbs must be cut no longer than 8 feet long or they will not be picked up.)  
Fireplace ash must be in plastic bags.**

**The maximum limit of items the City will pick up at each residence is 2 truck loads -- one load of household items and one load of tree limbs.**

**SPECIAL NOTE: Please separate the types of trash, i.e., tree limbs from metals, etc. because they are disposed of in different locations at the landfill. Mattresses and furniture need to be separate from other trash.**

**Hazardous waste such as paint, motor oil, batteries, pesticides, poisons, caustic chemicals, appliances with freon, etc. WILL NOT be picked up and should be taken by owners directly to the county landfill.**

**REMINDER: TWICE-A-WEEK PICKUP BEGINS THE WEEK OF APRIL 12<sup>th</sup>.**

**Regular household trash and recyclables will be picked up on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Yard waste for Monday's route will be picked up on Thursday. Yard waste for Tuesday's route will be picked up on Friday. Yard waste for Wednesday's route will be picked up on Wednesday afternoon.**

**Yard waste must be placed at the curb and must be in a solid container!**

**For Handicap Accommodations, call the City Office at 877-5000.**



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