



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## *Hospital boss speaks out*

# Cost cited as factor in emergency room change

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Michael Boyles, Citizens Medical Center, Inc.'s chief executive officer, said cost is the major factor in the hospital's decision to contract with a Texas company to provide emergency room doctors.

He also downplayed rumors that contract doctors would not perform certain functions and local doctors would continue to be on-call.

"The emergency room lost \$198,765 last year," Boyles said, "and Kevin (Trenkle, chief financial officer) estimates that will drop to \$81,475."

Although Staff Care, Inc. of Irving, Texas

will cost more up front than using local doctors, Boyles said the difference would be made up in billing since every patient will see a doctor.

Boyles gave some figures on emergency usage at the hospital. During 2000, there were 2,940 visits to the facility, of which 1,841 were billable.

The others resulted in admissions. "When someone is admitted, we don't charge them for the emergency room," he said.

The average cost to the hospital for a visit was \$145.32 and the average bill was \$89.59, of which Trenkle estimated 65-70 percent were actually paid.

Currently, costs are running at \$199.35 while

billing is at \$100.95. Boyles explained the difference is what insurance companies and government sources, such as Medicare, are willing to pay.

Projections for next year, using outside doctors, are for costs to drop to \$151.22 and billing to average \$104.79.

These figures come from averaging, Boyles said, and cautioned that not all bills will be the same.

Although he declined to give exact figures on the contracts, Boyles said the cost of Staff Care physicians would be more during the week, but less on the weekends than the current contract.

"They will cost about \$350 (per day) more during the week, but save us \$1,500 on the weekends," he said.

That averages out to a \$250 a week increase in costs, something Boyles said can be made up by projected increases in billing.

Trenkle projected the new contract would result in an average cost of \$151.22 and an average bill of \$104.79.

"The doctors from Staff Care are certified by the National Commission in Quality Assurance," he said.

"That is one of the strictest certifications a doctor can have."

"I believe the residency training is preferred,

but not required," he added. The doctors will care for obstetrics, trauma and orthopedics as they come into the emergency room, Boyles said.

They won't handle planned deliveries. "The patient's physician will still be called for cases of labor," he said. "But they will be on hand for emergencies."

Boyles said the company had a very good reputation, including hospitals in Tyler, Texas and Via Christi, who operates both St. Francis and St. Joseph hospitals in Wichita.

The also supply specialists and family practitioners for clinics and hospitals in all 50 states, according to Boyles.

## Two area hospitals weigh in

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Hospital administrators from Goodland, and Burlington, Colo., say they haven't considered using an outside service to provide emergency room doctors, although they said they might be open if the need arose.

Jay Jolle, new administrator at the Goodland Regional Medical Center, said he hadn't even considered the option, primarily because, "I've only been here a month."

Jolle said the Goodland hospital has six doctors on rotation and they haven't had any problems.

"There are pros and cons to both systems," he added.

Jim Jordan, Kit Carson County Medical Center's administrator, said public sentiment has kept them from trying the new system.

"Many of our patients don't want to change a system that has worked for 50 years," he said.

Jordan said hospital officials have never looked into the cost for that reason, although he said there might be some benefits.

"Each situation is different," he said.

Both administrators were contacted as to their opinions on the changes being planned in Colby.

## Testing the equipment



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Colby Assistant Fire Chief Rick Dickman, Service Officer J.L. Ellis and fireghter Sean Hankin tested the pump on Engine 2 in the old Gibson parking lot on Tuesday. The fire departmennt will be testing

pumps on all trucks during the summer. Equipment testing and training are part of an ongoing program to make sure the fire department is ready for any emergency, according to Dickman.

## Change concerns Jennings

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

At least one new doctor is concerned about his livelihood in light of Citizens Medical Center's plan to hire Staff Care, Inc. to provide doctors for the emergency room.

Dr. Jeff Jennings will be starting a practice at the Colby Medical and Surgical Center in August.

"I was told I would be able to build a patient base by working in the emergency room," he said.

Although the hospital's Chief Executive Officer Michael Boyles said local doctors would be able to work in the emergency room under the service, Jennings said he is still concerned about building a practice.

Jennings said he wanted to be able to establish a practice in his home town and the emergency room is a good place for young doctors to establish a practice.

Jennings is the son of Dave and Donna Jennings, Colby.



Dr. Jennings

# Local interests discuss new road at county commissioner's meeting

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

B.J. Melvin, Ross Rodenbeck and Mike Woofter discussed plans for a road to the new truck stop south of town with the Thomas County commissioners at their Monday meeting.

The city plans to build a road south of the Comfort Inn from Highway 25 to the east side of the property. It will be called Horton Avenue.

The county proposes to build a three to four-lane gravel road from Horton Avenue to the east I-70 exit at Country Club Drive.

The commissioners told the trio to come back with specific drawings for what they wanted, and the commissioners would approve or disapprove.

Melvin is the realtor representing Rodenbeck who owns adjacent property. Woofter, Woofter Construction and Irrigation, will build and own the truck stop.

Woofter said he had bulldozed the station south of Comfort Inn and hauled the debris out to the landfill, paying \$5,400 in tipping fees. He said he would be interested in paying to have the concrete from construction and demolition debris crushed, and then using it as a sub-base on roads. The landfill has an estimated 3,600 tons of concrete which would cost \$30,000 to be crushed by a Scott City man.

The commissioners said they had considered crushing the concrete and using it on county roads, and for the new road at the landfill, but they would check with the Chris Bieker, roads supervisor and Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor, and see what they thought and let Woofter know.

Bieker was contacted and he said there was not enough material to help him, and Woofter could have it as far as he was concerned.

In other business:

- The commissioners reviewed a letter saying the Trego County Commissioners had reached an agreement with Kelley Detention Services of Kansas City, Mo., to continue to operate the Northwest Kansas Regional Juvenile Detention Center in WaKeeney. The detention facility services a 26-county area in northwest and central Kansas.

- Jumper presented his report. The landfill, he said, is averaging 15.23 tons of solid municipal waste per day so far this year, and more is expected during the summer. The landfill is kept open under a small arid landfill exemption from the state as long as it averages less than 20 tons per day. The landfill has generated \$72,000 as of the end of May, which the commissioners estimate is right on target. This is the first year the county has operated the landfill, taking it over from the city on Jan. 1.

- Thaniel Monaco, Reed Miller and Dana Daniels of Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers of McCook and Kearney, Neb., discussed plans for expansion of the Thomas County landfill. The county plans to open another pit soon and the consulting firm will help keep construction within the requirements of Kansas law. They will draw up plans, and report back to the commissioners.

- The commissioners said Allan Taylor, county attorney, is researching who is responsible for paying for the autopsies on the man who committed suicide when a state highway patrol trooper stopped him on the I-70. They will pay the bill, but will try to recover the money elsewhere if possible.

- They received a letter from Wayne Lofton of High Plains Mental Health in Hays saying he was retiring after 25 years, effective July 1.
- They reviewed the following Thomas County Highway Department

May work report, showing production of sealing sand was completed at Fulwider Pit. The following amounts were then hauled: 737 cubic yards to Brownville Stockpile, 649 yards to Levant Stockpile, and 748 yards to Barrett Stockpile.

Sealing sand was also hauled from Sears Pit to Goossen Stockpile (726 yards) and Zoberst Stockpile (275 yards). Gravel was hauled from Sears Pit and laid down as follows: 54 cubic yards to County Road 465 south of Rexford and 72 yards to County Road 431 east of Colby.

Work in East Hale Township consisted of installing culverts, blading roads, and cleaning out a culvert. In North Randall, roads were bladed, their mower was worked on, and ditches were mowed.

Other work consisted of the following: Finished laying one mile of gravel

on County Road 412 west (in the south part of county); repaired guardrail posts on County Road 388 (south of Colby); swept County Road 465 north of Rexford for overlay; cleaned out culvert on County Road 465 at Rexford; hauled 22 yards of fine sand to the city of Colby; sanded the parking lot at the courthouse; hand patched County Road 391 south of Brewster, County Road 407 south of Levant, County Road 465, Frontage Road, and old Highway 24; installed signs for South Randall and West Hale Townships; mowed; cut trees east of Menlo; bladed roads; checked and put up traffic signs; checked and put up 911 signs; and serviced and repaired vehicles and equipment.

The commissioners will meet again next Monday at 1 p.m. in the commissioners room of the courthouse. All meetings are open to the public and input is appreciated.

## Briefly

### Weather: Heat relief seen

Some relief from the heat is in store for the Colby area, says the National Weather Service. Tonight, partly cloudy, a 20 percent chance for thunderstorms, low in the 50s and south winds 10-20 mph, shifting to the northwest late. Wednesday, partly sunny, a 20 percent chance for thunderstorms, high 75-80 and north winds 10-20 mph. Wednesday night, cloudy, a 30 percent chance for thunderstorms and the low in the middle 50s. Thursday, dry, variable winds, the high in the 70s. Monday's high in Colby was 97 and the low this morning was 61. Precipitation remains at 0.09 inches for the month. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth remains at 81 degrees. The records for June 12: 105 in 1950 and 41 in 1985. *(The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

### Disaster drill is today

Colby and Thomas County will hold a disaster drill today from 6 to 8:30 p.m. in the vicinity of Colby High School.

According to John Lygeros, disaster preparedness director, the team will be using South Franklin from the high school to College Drive. "We are asking people to avoid using these streets during the drill," he said.

### Bowhunters to hold open shoot

The Northwest Kansas Bowhunters Club will hold an archery shoot beginning at 1 p.m., Sunday, at the archery range, located north of Fike Park in Colby. The shoot is open to everyone and, according to Robb Ross, one of the organizers, participants do not need to be members. For information, call 462-6318.

### Taxes due next week

Thomas County Treasurer Donita Applebury said today that the second half of the 2000 property taxes are due in the treasurer's office by Wednesday, June 20. For information or questions, call 462-4520.

### Race lunchers needed

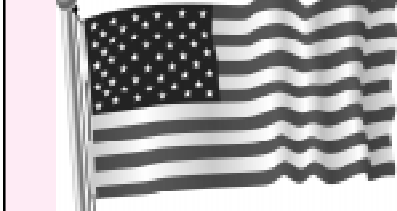
The Great Race is coming to Colby, and subsequently the

Convention and Visitors Bureau's Director Lelani Thomas needs volunteers to host a driver and navigator for lunch. The event will feature antique cars and trucks in a precision race across the United States.

Events will begin at 11:15 Saturday, June 23. Cost for the luncheon is \$30 and is on a first come first serve basis. For more information, call Thomas at 462-3401

### Fair board to meet

The Thomas County Free Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. Thursday at the 4-H building.



Your flag is in today's  
Colby Free Press

Fair plans and any other business matters needing attention will be taken up

### Remove cemetery flowers

The Cemetery Board requests that decorations be removed from Beulah Cemetery by Wednesday, June 13, unless they are permanent displays.

### Group needs officers

Colby Secondary Parent Teacher Student Association still need officers for the year 2001-2002. Call 462-7188.

