

Hospital Happenings

TAMA UNGER/Colby Free Press

Kathy Bissitt, director of surgery at Citizens Medical Center in Colby, showed off the hospital's new arthroscopy equipment. Shoulders and knees mostly benefit from this new procedure as it removes damaged tissue within the joint using a small incision. However, the new unit can also do laparoscopy procedures on appendix and gall bladders. With the new system entire procedures will now be on CD Rom to be viewed later or kept in patient's charts.



Rural libraries struggle to make ends meet

GYPSUM (AP) — Thanks to Peggy Woods, Gypsum, population about 400, has a working library.

It's in a large room at the rear of the Gypsum City Office building that is lined nearly floor to ceiling with shelves of books, magazines and newspapers and two computers.

Woods receives \$7 an hour and no employee benefits as the part-time librarian at Gypsum Community Library. She keeps the doors to the library open 14 hours a week.

These are challenging times for small, rural public libraries in Kansas. Because of declining population and a tiny property tax base, one-third of the 54 libraries that are part of the Central Kansas Library System can't raise enough tax revenue to pay a librarian to work just 10 hours a week, said James Swan, administrator of the Great Bend-based system.

The Central Kansas Library System is one of seven established in Kansas by the Legislature to provide services for small libraries and also help fund them. The library system has the authority to levy property taxes in rural areas to fund grants made annually to small libraries.

Still, small libraries work with limited funds. At Gypsum, the City Council last month approved a library budget of just \$7,400 for next year.

That will be funded chiefly through a local property tax levy of 3.109 mills and a grant of \$2,000 from the Central Kansas Library System.

Nearly all the library's budget, about \$5,000, is earmarked for Woods' wages. That leaves only about \$2,400 for other expenses that include Internet access. The annual budget for new books and periodicals is only about \$700.

The key to survival for small libraries, Swan said, is "the will of the people." He hopes that will be strong.

"So many people in our area have lost their schools. If the library goes, there's nothing left," Swan said. "The library tends to be the social cement that holds things together."

Leslie Bell, Norton, administrator of the Northwest Kansas Library System, said most rural libraries are tended by those with no college training as librarians.

"The majority are just people interested in libraries and are willing to put in hours to provide that service to their communities," Bell said.

That describes Woods, Gypsum librarian for 15 years. At her library, the book collection includes about 6,000 titles, a fraction of the 219,489-book collection at the Salina Public Library in the county seat.

But Woods takes pride in knowing nearly all her visitors and taking the time to help them. She tries to keep in the collection the new-

est best-sellers. What books she doesn't have she can request through a sharing program with other libraries in the state.

Roy Bird, of the Topeka-based State Library of Kansas, said rural libraries generally "are doing a fantastic job. You can find things at small rural libraries, just like you can at larger libraries, such as Salina."

The State Library of Kansas, which collects statistical data on each of the state's 325 public libraries, has found that tax levies of two to six mills are common sources of funding for Kansas libraries. Those who live outside the taxing districts of local libraries are taxed through the regional library system.

This year, the assessed valuation for the 16 counties of the Central Kansas Library District is projected to rise about 14 percent — to \$891.2 million, Swan said. As a result, the Central Kansas Library System is able to decrease its property tax levy slightly, to 1.213 mills, yet generate more revenue.

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2nd - Shirley Weber

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Kansas City, Kansas may have charter school for 2007 school year

KANSAS CITY (AP) — Two groups have announced plans to try to open the city's first charter school by next fall.

Pleasant Green Baptist Church and the North East Business Association plan to submit separate applications to the Kansas City, Kan., school board this fall.

Charter schools are public schools freed from some state regulations. In Kansas, the schools are tied to the districts in which they operate. Kansas has 26 charter schools in 24 districts.

According to a preliminary plan submitted to the Kansas City, Kan. school board, Pleasant Green Baptist Church's proposed school would be "open to any student who demonstrates maturity, advancement and the ability to handle an accelerated, high-achieving, college-preparatory curriculum."

Rev. Jarvis L. Collier said it would not be a religious-based school. He envisions the charter school as the "initial 'feeder' elementary school" to Sumner Academy of Arts and Science, a public college-preparatory school for students in eighth through 12th grade. Collier said the school is expected to serve 120 students in preschool through third grade.

If the plan is approved, the church would close the religious-based school it has run for 29 years and the charter school would go in that space.

The North East Business Association, a nonprofit group that focuses on community revitalization, hopes to open the Maurice Holman Academy of Excellence, an elementary school for 100 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The school would emphasize political science and entrepreneurship, said Chiquita Coggs, the executive director of the North East Business Association.

Coggs said the group is finishing plans for a location and employees.

Kansas City, Kan., school board president Gloria Willis said she and other board members would closely follow state law as they receive and review the applications.

Both proposals must be submitted by Nov. 1. If the school board approves the plans, they move on to the state in December. The state would make a final decision by Jan. 15.

Plans that are approved would have permission to operate with state dollars for five years.

Saturday Sept. 9, 2006

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