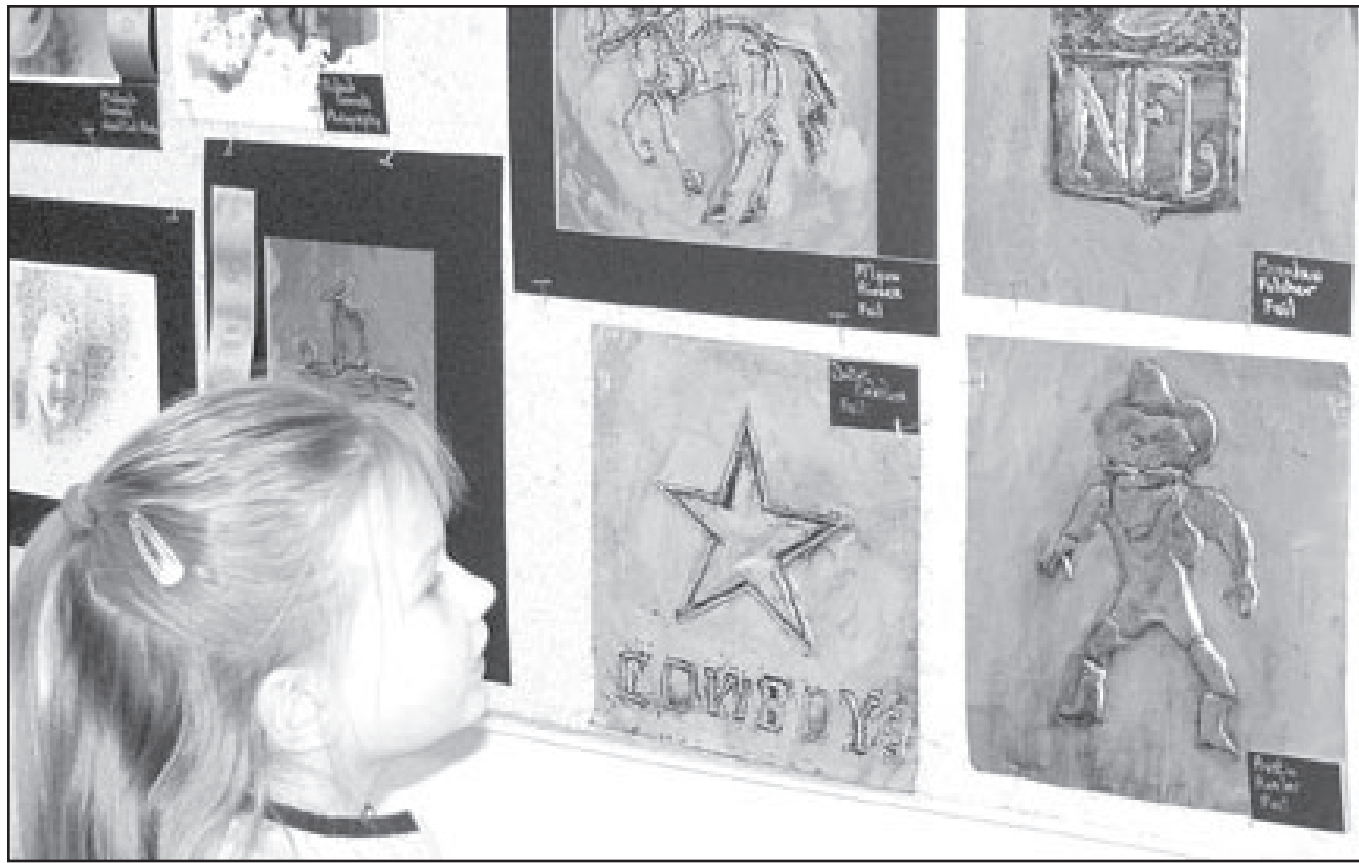


Grant Junior High art teacher Doug Peck (above) holds the hanging turtle sculpture that Reed Bellamy made that received the gold judges choice award at the Northwest Kansas League art show. Britanie Weber, 6, looked at the foil relief projects Sunday afternoon at the Carnegie Arts Center. The junior high art is on display through the month of April.

Photos by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News



## Grant student art on display

Artwork from Grant Junior High students is on display at the Carnegie Arts Center this month, with an opening reception held Sunday afternoon.

Doug Peck, Grant art teacher, who will retire at the end of this year after 30 years of teaching, said the work includes sculpture, glass etching,

pewter jewelry, mixed media and drawings.

He said the blue ribbons are from the Northwest Kansas League art meet, where his students earned 15 ribbons. That included a gold for Reed Bellamy's hanging turtle that was the Judges Choice.

Peck said several show good talent the

students could develop through high school and beyond.

The students' work will be on display through April. The center is open daily, Tuesday through Friday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

# Hospital staff learning about proper patient coding

By Sharon Corcoran

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Goodland Regional Medical Center had a visitor from Florida last week, helping the staff know how to use the proper codes on medical charts to be sure services are documented so insurance providers will pay.

Dr. Todd Husty, chief executive officer of Medical Audit Resource Services of Oviedo, Fla., checked the hospital's coding practices and talked with staff about how to document the services they provide. He told the hospital's board at its monthly meeting Monday, March 31, what he does and why it's important.

The Institute of Medicine found in a study that 98,000 Americans die each year from medical errors, Husty said.

"Congress got ahold of this," he said, "and leaned on Medicare. We've been under fire ever since."

Husty told the board the Centers on Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency that supervises government payments, now has a policy requiring hospitals to document infections as "Present on Admission" or acquired in the hospital and

## Improper coding can cost hospital money

Medical billing expert Todd Husty told a story about a doctor he knows that illustrates a problem with a lack of documentation besides patient safety — needing to prove they billed insurance the right amount.

He said the doctor called him to borrow \$300,000. He sees an inordinate number of tough patients, Husty said, and it got him into trouble.

Dr. Husty said his friend had too many high codes in his charts, and without proper documentation, Medicare wanted some money back. Husty said he referred the man to a lawyer, who helped him reduce the amount he owed, but said he would rather help doctors avoid getting

into trouble in the first place.

"I would rather have them focus on doing a good job," he said.

The government is looking for a bell curve on the cost of patient care, Jolly said, and that just doesn't happen. Some doctors see a large number of patients with complex cases that should have higher codes, he said, but if they aren't documented properly, Medicare may do an audit and decide they want some money back.

"That's why we are doing our own audit (at Goodland Regional Medical Center)," he said, "to prevent that from happening."

The government hires recovery audit

contractors, Jolly said, who are paid a percentage of what they collect from hospitals. They figure on the high end, he said, looking only for things that were overpaid. If anything was underpaid, he said, the hospital has to find that.

There is a case right now, he said, where they are asking for \$400 million, basically the entire net worth of the hospital involved. These auditors take a heavy-handed approach, said Goodland Regional Administrator Jay Jolly said, and they know hospitals tend to settle because it costs so much to fight. Of course, he said, that hospital will fight the charges to the end; it has to survive.

reducing what they will pay for treatment of hospital-acquired infections "I call it Preventable on Admission," Husty said. "If they get an infection, they're

not paying for it now."

The national coding standards are driven by Medicare, Jolly said.

Husty's company provides billing and

coding services, Jolly said, and audits to help hospitals with compliance, to be sure they are conducting business within the law.

The hospital does a financial audit every

year, Administrator Jay Jolly said, and does spot audits in several areas to see how well it is doing. The staff sent in information ahead of time, he said, and Husty had his audit ready before he got here. He worked with the staff while here on how to apply things, Jolly said.

Husty said they look at documentation on medical charts to see how they're coded. The company looks at 15,000 charts a month, he said, and each coder looks at 8,000 charts a year. The coders can tell who is doing a good job and who isn't, he said.

He said they found no problems with the quality of care at the Goodland hospital but do see some things to work on with coding.

Being precise with documentation is important because doctors are human, Husty said. One study looked at why doctors get sued, he said, and about 60 percent of the time it was due to memory failure or a lack of vigilance.

It's important for doctors to know what they need to put down on paper, he said, both to show what they did each day and so they don't forget something they need to do.

# Woman killed south of Colby in motorcycle accident on Friday

A Colby woman was killed Friday when she lost control of her motorcycle south of town Friday, slid into the ditch and was thrown into a sign post.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Brandi Layne McConnell, 42, was northbound on K-25 about 16 miles south of Colby, near the Logan County line, on a 2008 Harley-Davidson.

The trooper said she drifted to the east shoulder and the cycle overturned into the east ditch. McConnell was ejected and struck a sign post. She and the cycle came to rest in the east ditch. The accident happened at 7:49 p.m., the patrol said.

The victim was taken to the Logan County Hospital in Oakley, where she was pronounced dead.

McConnell, a niece of Doug and Jim Jackson of Goodland, was born Nov. 25, 1965, to Jim Sites and Doris (Jackson) Schoenberger in Atwood. She was a shipping supervisor for Red River Commodities in Colby.

She attended schools in Grinnell and Brewster. Ms. McConnell was active in the Toys for Tots program and bowled for Big Brothers Big Sisters. She enjoyed fishing, hunting and her 2008 Harley.

Other survivors include her fiancée, Tracey Griffin of Colby; two sons, Tyson Berens of Colby, and Corry Berens of Springfield, S.D.; a daughter, Karlee (Jason) Washburn of Lawton, Iowa; her mother and stepfather, Doris (Gene) Schoenberger of Brewster; her stepmother,

Lynn Sites of Brighton, Colo.; a brother, Tracy (Robyn) Sites of Sioux Falls, S.D.; a sister, Martina (Shawn) Richards of Fountain, Colo.; four granddaughters and two grandsons.

She was preceded in death by her father; a sister, Nicci Russell; two nephews, Tanner and Bobby Racette; and her grandparents, Phil and Irene Jackson and Lee and Lola Stoffer.

Services will be 1 p.m. (Mountain Time) on Thursday, April 10, 2008, at the Kersenbrock Funeral Chapel, 745 S. Country Club Drive, in Colby, with the Rev. Mike Pinkelman officiating, with burial in the Grinnell Cemetery.

Visitation will be 1-7 p.m. (Mountain Time) on Wednesday, April 9, 2008, at the chapel. Memorial contributions may be made in care of the chapel.

## Electronic records not foolproof board told

Goodland Regional Medical Center board member Randy Coleman asked Dr. Todd Husty was doctors can do to prevent expensive mistakes.

Coleman said he had read an article in *The Denver Post* about documentation for surgery.

The doctor wanted to make sure he got everything right, so he double and triple checked everything, Coleman said. He took out the patient's right kidney, like the chart said to do, but there was nothing wrong with it. The documentation was all wrong.

He said one problem with electronic records is that one mistake can follow a patient for life.

There are problems in the system, he said, and the only solution is being extra diligent to get the right information in from the beginning.

With surgery, you have to take the time to be right, Husty said; there will be some mistakes, but many can be avoided.

"I understand that was an elec-

tronic record," Husty said. "Once you write in 'right kidney,' it cuts forever."

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Facilitated by the USD 352 Task Force

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April 17, 2008 at 7:00 PM

GHS Cafeteria

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## corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

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