

# Health insurance increases 4.7 percent for city

By Tom Betz  
 nt.betz@nwkans.com

City commissioners approved renewal of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance plan for city employees with an increase of about 4.7 percent over the past year.

The increase for the city would be about \$22,300 over the \$551,000 paid in 2010, and the rates for each group changed a bit for the 51 contracts the city has.

Charles Krull, area representative for Blue Cross and Blue Shield said on Monday, Jan. 17, he was glad to be in Goodland, but was not sure if the city was going to get another refund check this year. He said the city had an excellent renewal and would know in March if the city would get a refund check as they have in the past.

Over the past two years Krull has delivered refund checks to the city of \$59,907 for 2008, and \$116,637 for 2009. The large check was presented by Krull in July, and he said at the time he had good news on the city retro rate review.

He said the Affordable Health Care Act had changed things a bit, and the first change was on Sept. 23 and to take effect on the group renewal date. He said the federal law will add a couple of more changes that

will be effective with the renewal of the city plan in March. The first will be all maximum lifetime limits will go away. In the past the city has had a maximum of \$5 million lifetime benefit. The second is that children can be covered to age 26, an increase from the previous maximum of 23.

He told the commissioners there are two options for the city in the future with one being a grandfathered plan or a non-grandfathered plan.

He said the questions to be asked to determine whether the city is going to be a grandfathered plan are dealing with change of benefits, change of co-insurance payments, deductibles or change in office co-pay. He said the other question was if the employer was going to lower the employer contribution. He said the employer cannot lower the contribution level more than 5 percent and remain as a grandfathered plan. He said that change is on every tier of the plan, and depends on the percentage the city pays.

He said if the city would change more than 5 percent the plan would become non-grandfathered, and some preventative benefits would be added to the plan. He said the benefits are not a bad thing, but do

increase the cost at bit.

He said most groups have remained grandfathered. He said the other preventative benefits add 3 to 4 percent to the cost.

Commissioner Dave Daniels said if the employer contribution was lowered over the next three years the city would not be a grandfathered plan.

Krull said said that could happen. He said right now the insurance companies have estimated the cost of the preventative benefits, and will have a clearer figure next year. He said some of the required benefits are not going to make a significant impact on the plan, but others will. He said some of the requirements are things that Blue Cross and Blue Shield have already added to the plans.

He said another difference is non-grandfathered plans is does not matter if the children have access to other insurance they can be on a grandfathered plan. He said that is not so on the non-grandfathered plan. If a mother is working at a place that offers health insurance and the father has health insurance at his job the mother would not be eligible to add children to the plan.

Krull said the other major change health care reform has done is to remove preexist-

ing conditions for children under 19. He said the majority of the health reform changes go into effect in January of 2014.

"There will be lots of changes as the plans get started," he said.

He said an example is when the feds set up the high risk pool in September they expected about 450,000 to enroll, but so far have about 4,000. He said he is sure other changes will be made in the next two years before everything is expected to go into effect.

On the city plan Krull said 35 percent of the rate is based on utilization and 65 percent based on trends of what is expected to happen over the next year for the loss ratio.

He said the annual trend have been 8.5 percent on the Blue Cross side, 7.5 percent on the Blue Shield side, 5.5 percent on dental and 9 percent on prescription drug.

He said the Goodland plan is going up an average of 4.7 percent with the single going up 3.5 percent and the family going up about 5.7 percent. The prescription drug went up .6 percent and dental up 1.2 percent.

He said the city drug prescription benefit is at a low usage. He said city employees are not on high dollar drugs and at this time the

city has a fairly healthy group.

City Manager Doug Gerber said the city tries to manage the insurance plan and the employees help on that.

"It is not always an accident you have great rates," Krull said. "Your employees do a great job."

Krull said it would be about the second week of March to know if the city is going to get any money back. He said it has been a good thing for the city, and they are working to make things work with an 8 percent reserve.

Daniels asked if the ambulance coverage included an air ambulance.

Krull said it did cover air ambulance services.

Mayor Josh Dechant asked if it was Gerber's recommendation to throw out the grandfathered plan.

Gerber said his recommendation was to stay as a grandfathered plan.

Commissioner Annette Fairbanks made the motion to approve the renewal and maintain the current employee contribution rate, seconded by Daniels. Dechant joined the other two in voting in favor. Commissioner John Garcia was out of town.

# County health insurance costs increase 6.6 percent

By Tom Betz  
 nt.betz@nwkans.com

Sherman County was given a preliminary look at the renewal of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance for this year with an estimated 6.6 percent increase.

Charlie Krull, area representative for Blue Cross and Blue Shield met with the commissioners on Tuesday as he had been in town to make a similar presentation to the city commission.

"You had a pretty good year," Krull said, "compared to the rest of the groups."

He said the county cost would raise about 6.6 percent and said that was below the trend of 8.5 percent. He said the rate of increase was considerably lower than in the past.

He said the premium is based 65 percent on the annual trends and 35 percent on the county employee usage of the plan.

"Your group had a better year than expected," he said. "The loss ratio was 79 percent and lower than the 83 to 89 percent expected."

He said the Affordable Health Care Act at the federal level had begun to make changes in the plans beginning on Sept. 23.

He said one of the major changes would cover children from ages 23 to 26, and for the county that could impact about 34 contracts or about 50 percent of the group.

He told the commissioners the maximum limits were eliminated with the health reform law and would disappear in the upcoming renewal.

He said the employee contribution might change, but if the county wants to keep the current plan and be a grandfathered plan no changes can be made.

He said if the county goes to a non-grandfathered plan a series of preventative care benefits have to be added. He said many of these are already covered under the county plan.

To determine if the plan is going to be grandfathered or non-grandfathered the county Krull said the employer contribution is going to

be compared on March 1 to what it was on March 23 last year. If the commissioners lower the employer amount by more than 5 percent the plan would not be grandfathered.

He said the insurance company doesn't really know what the non-grandfathered real cost is, but will know more by next year with a year of actual use and cost. He said right now the company is guessing.

Commissioner Cynthia Strnad asked what Blue Cross and Blue Shield was projecting for Sherman County.

Krull said with the 6 percent the dollar amount would be \$57,349.46 per month for the health portion, \$2,190.75 for the dental and \$11,909.81 for prescription drug.

Commissioner Larry Enfield said it will be about \$72,000 a month for health insurance.

Commissioner Max Linin said he did not want to think about it, but he knows it is something the county has to look at.

Krull said he could remember when the overall used to be less than

the prescription drug cost.

He said the Goodland School District had a different plan where the district pays 100 percent of the individual and 60 percent of the family.

He said the city pays 100 percent for employee and family with a \$500 deductible and 80-20 co pay. He said the city prescription drug plan is different as well.

The County has a total of 63 contracts with 11 single employees, 10 with children, 18 with spouses and 24 family plans.

He said in the past Sherman County was partially funded or self-funded. He said Blue Cross and Blue Shield did away with some of that a few years ago, but in the past year the company has added some of those options back in. He said it might be of some advantage to the county. He said when a group is self funded the company sends bills weekly for payment.

"I like self funding," he said. "It caps your groups liability on a large claim, and 50 percent of the claims are paid on 3 percent of our clients."

He said for the county 50 percent of the utilization was 3 percent of the group.

Linin said he was not excited about insurance and felt was one of those deals where you throw the dice.

Krull said some counties don't want to be in the risk business. He said some of the self-funding depends on how you start.

"If you have a good year it will be good," he said, "but if it is a terrible year you will wish you had never looked at it."

"We are all getting older," Strnad said.

"That is what I was thinking about," Linin said.

"We have a lot of long term employees," Strnad said.

Krull said the county could consider having health reimbursement accounts, with a higher deductible and pay for the out of pocket expense. He said that was not always a great plan, but the county could consider a higher stop loss amount and be partially self-funded.

He said he would work it out and come back with information. He said the partially self-funded plan would add work to the county clerk's office.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said that would probably mean another employee in the office.

The Commissioners next meeting will be at 8 a.m. on Monday to pay bills, and they will meet at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 8.

*Check The Goodland Star-News out on Facebook*

## City Take Charge kick-off Saturday

CONTEST, from Page 1A

coming up in the year, and continues to look for good ideas to get the people involved in saving energy. The object of the challenge is to reduce the amount of energy each city uses and at the end of September the city with the largest total of savings will win the \$100,000 to be used to improve energy efficiency in the city.

All events for the city will be posted on the city web site <http://cityofgoodland.org>, city Facebook page and in the monthly city newsletter.

Committee members include from the city, Dustin Bedore, Mike Abby, Thorson, Johnson and Michael Solomon, economic development director; Chris Bauman from Black Hills Energy; Pastor Darrian Hypel of the Lutheran Church

representing the ministerial alliance; Chuck Lutters of the Northwest Tech College; Kim Bohme of Miller's Home Furnishing; Kevin Rasure of Rasure Lumber; Tina Goodwin marketing director for the Goodland hospital; Kenny Studer for the Goodland School District; Josh Harenberg and Tom Betz of The Goodland Star-News and Jennifer Logan from Walmart.

## February Consultant Schedule

ALLERGIST**	Jeffrey Rumbyrt, M.D.	February 21
CARDIOLOGIST	Barry Smith, M.D.	February 9 & 23
CARDIOLOGIST	Vijay Subbarao, M.D.	February 10
CARDIOLOGIST**	Christine Fisher, M.D.	February 14
COUNSELING SERVICES		Thursdays by Appointment
DIETITIAN	Sarah Linton, RD, LD, CDE	Monday - Friday
EARS, NOSE, THROAT	Alfred N. Carr, M.D.	February 10, 11 & 25
ENDOCRINOLOGIST	Gerald Poticha, M.D.	February 17 & 18
GASTROENTEROLOGIST	Jeffrey D. Huston, M.D.	February 8, 21 & 22
GENERAL SURGEON	David D. Beck, M.D.	February 3 & 17
GENERAL SURGEON	Jeffrey Cross, M.D.	February 10 & 24
GYNECOLOGY	Laura Rokosz, M.D.	February 9 & 16
NEUROLOGIST	Steven J. Gulevich, M.D.	February 2, 9 & 23
OBSTETRICS/GYNECOLOGY	David Forschner, M.D.	March 16
ONCOLOGY	Prakash Neupane, M.D.	February 4, 11, 18 & 25
ONCOLOGY/HEMATOLOGY	Martin Rubinowitz, M.D.	February 1
OPHTHALMOLOGIST	Brian Joondeph, M.D.	February 11
OPHTHALMOLOGIST	Ronald Wise, M.D.	February 4 & 18
OPHTHALMOLOGIST**	Eric Fry, M.D.	March 10 & 11
OPHTHALMOLOGIST	Robert Fante, M.D.	February 25
ORTHOPEDIST	Tim Birney, M.D.	February 14
ORTHOPEDIST	Armond Hatzidakis, M.D.	April 4
ORTHOPEDIST	James Holmes, M.D.	February 21
ORTHOPEDIST	Edward Parks, M.D.	February 28
ORTHOPEDIST	Raj Bazaz, M.D.	February 14
ORTHOPEDIST	Kevin Nagamani, M.D.	February 2
ORTHOPEDIST	Gareth Shemesh, M.D.	March 10 & 11
PATHOLOGIST	Pathology Services P.C.	Call for Availability
PODIATRIST	Erik Ouderkirk, D.P.M.	February 9
PODIATRIST	Daniel Mallett, D.P.M.	February 23
PULMONOLOGIST	Ken Weisiger, M.D.	February 15
RADIOLOGISTS	Professional Radiology Services	WEEK DAYS
SPEECH THERAPY	Crystal Schultz	Monday - Thursday
UROLOGIST**	Kevin McDonald M.D.	February 16
UROLOGIST**	Wallace Curry, M.D.	February 22

\*\*For an appointment with the Allergist please call 1-888-849-8424  
 \*\*For an appointment with Dr. Fry please call 1-800-526-3937  
 \*\*For an appointment with Dr. Fisher please call 1-888-625-4699  
 \*\*For an appointment with Dr. McDonald or Dr. Curry please call 877-312-1619

Goodland Family Health Center  
 106 Willow Road • (785) 890-6075  
 Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
 Walk-in Clinic M-F 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m./Sat 9:00-11:00  
 Dr. Mohamedine Shafei (Out of office on Monday)  
 Dr. Travis Daise (Out of office on Wednesday)  
 Dr. David Younger (Out of office on Thursday)  
 Dr. Lisa M. Unruh - Pediatrician (Out of office on Tuesday)  
 Jackie Jorgensen, ARNP



## TAKE CHARGE CHALLENGE KICKOFF EVENT

JANUARY 29, 2011

At the SHERMAN COUNTY HEALTH FAIR from 8 a.m.-11:30 a.m. at the Northwest Tech College.



[www.takechargekans.org](http://www.takechargekans.org)

Stop by the Take Charge Challenge booth and learn how you can help our community win a \$100,000 efficiency prize, by just making the switch! Sign up for a home energy audit. Take Charge of your health and save energy!

### JOIN THE CITY IN SAVING ENERGY

Five Cities in this region will compete to save energy, save money and win the Take Charge Challenge between January 2011 and October 2011. The winner will be awarded a \$100,000 efficiency prize that will benefit the community as a whole. Goodland is competing against Colby, Oakley, Hoxie and Wakeeney.

## GHS Cowboys of the Week

Based on positive academic performance, attendance improvement, positive attitude or random acts of kindness, the student nominees this week are: Holly Wilkening and Mac Purvis.



These students receive an Activity Period Pass. These students were randomly selected from all nominees and will receive a local food gift certificate, special parking, first in lunch line and recognized throughout the community!

Proud sponsor this week:

The Goodland Star-News

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**Holly Wilkening, Sophomore**  
 Nominated by: Mrs. Graybill  
 Parents: Sheila Walz  
 Activities: Dance



**Mac Purvis, Junior**  
 Nominated by: Mrs. Reed  
 Parents: Stan & Becky Purvis  
 Activities: Wrestling