

# Enterprise consortium hires new facilitator

By Tom Betz

*The Goodland Star-News*

The six counties of the Western Kansas Enterprise Facilitation Consortium met their new facilitator at a board meeting last Thursday in Leoti.

Wade Phillips, 30, of Manhattan, was hired by the board in December to replace Sam Lane, who had been fired in October. Board President Todd

Heitschmidt of Leoti introduced Phillips and said he is on the job and

is moving to Leoti to be in the district. He said Phillips was hired out of a pool of 20 people who submitted resumes in November.



Phillips

"I believe we have the best person to fill the position," Heitschmidt said. "He has the background, knowledge of small business and passion we need to help the small business entrepreneurs in our area."

Phillips said he was eager to get going, and was already taking calls

from people in many of the counties.

Sharla Krenzel, economic development director for Wichita County, said Suzette McFaul from the Sirolli Institute will be coming next week to spend three days training Phillips on the facilitation program created by Dr. Ernesto Sirolli, which was introduced in the United States in 1996.

She said McFaul, who is from New Westminster, British Columbia, was an enterprise facilitator for five years before joining the Sirolli Institute staff.

Phillips is originally from Lewis, Kan., near Kinsley.

He operated the Aggie Station Restaurant in Manhattan until fire destroyed the business in May.

Before that, he operated ProFitness in Manhattan for six years.

"I love rural America," Phillips wrote in his resume. "I wish I could make a living taking over the family farm. I wish I could find plentiful opportunities in rural Kansas."

"The town I grew up in had a grocery store, hardware store, full service gas station, a good cafe, beer

joint, newspaper, locally owned bank, Saturday night bingo games, used car dealership and machine/welding shop. The only thing that exists today is the beer joint

"We can romanticize and dream about that Main Street, bustling with commerce, without an open sparking spot, but it will take a new type of thinking to bring new people back to these towns."

Phillips said he has been visiting people in the member counties and will be in Sherman County on Friday.

The six counties are Sherman,

Wichita, Kearney, Scott, Greeley and Lane.

The enterprise facilitation project was started by the Kansas Department of Commerce and Development two years ago.

The state gave three groups \$200,000 each, and the counties were to raise \$100,000 locally for the three-year project.

The state has since expanded the number of enterprise facilitation groups, and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius as announced plans to expand the program again.

## Hospital seeks Medicare money

By Sharon Corcoran

*The Goodland Star-News*

The Goodland Regional Medical Center board voted Monday to seek more money from Medicare to compensate for a drop in patients in 2002, and to look for financing for \$2 million in long-term debt.

Jim Precht, hospital chief financial officer, recapped discussions from the finance committee meeting concerning the Medicare reimbursement, long-term debt, employee benefits and the December financial report, and presented the committee's recommendations at the board meeting.

Precht said he had talked to Roger Johnson, accountant with Johnson, Wendling and Roe, about the Medicare Sole Community Provider issue regarding the hospital's 2002 cost report.

Johnson estimates the hospital should be able to get \$230,000 in

additional reimbursement, Precht said, and has proposed a letter to begin seeking the money.

The hospital will need to pay Johnson \$15,000, the financial officer said.

Most requests are turned down, Precht said, and have to be appealed. He said the hospital's request will probably go to the Provider Reimbursement Review Board.

The process will probably take up to two years to settle, Precht said, and the hospital will incur legal fees along the way.

"In the 2002 year, we had significant drops in patients," Precht said. "That is the issue."

Medicare has in the past taken the view, he said, that unless a hospital's drop in patients was due to a disaster, such as a tornado or a boiler blowing up a portion of the building, the insurance wouldn't

reimburse for it.

Nonetheless, Precht said Johnson and attorney Dick Haye feel the hospital's position is sound, and its appeal should be successful.

The hospital board also approved officials' seeking financing for \$2 million of long-term debt by issuing 10-year industrial revenue bonds for private placement.

There will be up bond issuance cost around \$7,500, Precht said, but the refinancing would reduce the current cash requirements by \$10,000 per month.

Precht also discussed the hospital's efforts to catch up employee benefits and asked whether the hospital should use county tax money to catch up the payments.

He said the hospital should try to use that money to take care of benefits as soon as possible, but there are other responsibilities as well.

Board members agreed that

catching up with the employee benefits should have priority and said Precht should pay other bills with some of the money only if there are creditors that will shut their account down.

The hospital is behind on paying premiums to Blue Cross and Blue Shield for the employee health plan, he said, and the employee pension plan is still unfunded.

The hospital had caught up the Benefit Management Inc. health plan claims by year-end, Precht said, but had to make a last-minute deposit of \$65,000 and delay claims payment until the stop-loss insurance deposit is received.

The hospital had a net loss of \$69,391 in December and a net loss of \$764,956 for the year.

That includes \$638,904 of depreciation. The hospital paid \$3,507,398 in salaries and wages for the year.

## Mother questions use of search dog

SCHOOL, from Page 1

he is seeking ways to enhance the quality of its instruction.

In other business, the board

- Voted to republish the district's budget for 2003-2004 to reflect \$43,000 obtained as a result of the state audit in October.
- Voted to pay \$26,613 to Heartland Seating to repair the bleachers

in Max Jones Fieldhouse, including any necessary replacements.

- Presented Maggie Witzel with a certificate of recognition from the school board for being part of the team that won a national livestock judging contest.
- Heard from Richard Schwasinger on work done on the teachers' projects for the second phase of the state's vocational edu-

cation funding program and the benefits the school receives as a result.

He said last year the district received about \$95,000 from the program.

- Heard from Dennis Friedrichs about the progress of Science Olympiad Team Projects and invited board members and guests to the vocational building for an intro-

duction to the various projects and to meet some of the students.

- Voted to hire Mary Harkins as a full-time bus driver and Beth Rutz as an aide at North Elementary.

The meeting as adjourned at 10:29 p.m.

The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 12, at the school administration office, 1312 Main Ave.

## Goodland is losing postmaster to Colby



Goodland Postmaster Kenton Krehbiel checked postage with a hand held meter. Krehbiel will be leaving Goodland to become the new postmaster in Colby.

Goodland is losing its postmaster.

Kenton Krehbiel, postmaster here since for 6 1/2 years, takes over as postmaster of the regional hub in Colby on Feb. 7. Except for his time here, he's spent his entire career at the Colby office.

"I started at the Colby office in October 1975 to June of 1997," he said.

Krehbiel said he's happy to be going back to his home town, but he'll miss the people in Goodland.

"It always was my dream and goal," he said. "I've fulfilled that right now."

Colby is the mail processing center for the 677 area. All mail from this area goes to Colby, the sectional center, where it's processed and sent back out. Krehbiel said the of-

fice covers the nine counties in northwest Kansas.

He and his wife Sheila moved to Colby in 1973 and bought and ran Murphy's Cafe for about a year. They sold the cafe and then he went to work at Boogaarts grocery.

In April 1975, he passed the Postal Service test and was put on the roster until a position came open. He spent 28 years in the postal service.

His wife is a customer service representative at Sunflower Bank and they have two daughters and one grandson. Krehbiel is chairman of the Colby Community College board and a member of Colby Kiwanis Club.

He said there will be an installation ceremony later, but he takes over the office next week.

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