

\$1 THE NORTON TELEGRAM



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8 PAGES

Tuesday

August 16, 2011

Briefly

Breakfast for school staff on Thursday

The United Methodist Women annual Back to School breakfast for all USD 211 personnel will be Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the church.

Eisenhower open house this Friday

Eisenhower Elementary School is having an open house from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday. Bring your children to meet their home room teachers and to see their class rooms. While exploring, be sure to enjoy one of Ruby's famous cinnamon rolls.

Annual Alkathon set for Saturday

This Saturday, Valley Hope of Norton will hold the 44th annual Alkathon at the Catholic Parish Center at 104 S. Wabash in Norton.

All Valley Hope alumni, friends and family are welcome to attend the festivities, which include award presentation, speakers, fellowship, food and silent auction.

Registration begins at noon at Valley Hope and then at 1 p.m., a "freedom drive" will proceed to the Parish Center. Festivities at the Parish Center will kick off at 1:30 p.m. with the theme of "Valley Hope- Truly a Lifesaver."

Along with the Alkathon, Valley Hope will hold its annual meeting on Friday, Aug. 19 at 1 p.m.

For more information about the Alkathon or annual meeting, contact Norton Valley Hope at 785-877-5101.

Local author to hold book signing

Local author Randa Vollertsen will hold a book signing on Saturday at Garden Gate Florals, Etc from 1-3 p.m.

Vollertsen is the author of a children's book entitled "Mimi's Mulberry Tree" and along with the book's illustrator, Diane Pratt, she will be signing copies of the book for anyone who would like to visit.

Markets

Tuesday, August 16, 2011

Wheat.....\$7.26
Milo.....\$6.29
Soybeans.....\$12.59
Corn.....\$7.00
Markets Courtesy of Norton Ag Valley Co-Op

Weather

Tonight - Mostly cloudy with a slight chance of thunderstorms. Wednesday - Partly sunny with a slight chance of light showers. Wednesday Night - Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Thursday - Partly sunny.

Kingham Report

Friday, August 12.....Low 64, High 83
.10 Rain
Saturday, August 13.....Low 61, High 85
Sunday, August 14.....Low 60, High 86
Monday, August 15.....Low 63, High 90
1.10 Rain

(Readings taken at the Kingham farm 9 miles northwest of Norton)

Prayer

Loving God, always give us the faith to do your will and to trust you in the storms of life. Amen.

Library announces prize winners



The winners of the library's summer reading program prize drawing were announced Friday with four local children earning prizes for reading throughout the summer. Pictured left to right are Coral Stewart, 8; Robyn Manning, 5; Lane Stagemeyer, 7; and Seth Henrickson, 9. The children were the winners of new bicycles from the drawing.

By Carleen Bell
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The Norton Public Library's summer reading program wrapped up last week with the program's winners announced Friday.

Library officials reported that 270 children signed up for the program with 94 completing it. The participants kept track of the time they spent reading books throughout the summer and those who completed the program were entered into a drawing for prizes.

The winners of the prize drawing are as follows: Lane Stagemeyer, Robyn Manning, Seth Henrickson, Coral Stewart, Kaylynn Lantz, Lida Sharp, Que Tran and Ada Arford.

Also participating in the program were 21 adults who kept track of their summer reading time.

Each year, the library holds a variety of programs to keep children and adults interested in reading throughout the summer. The programs have included musicians, animal exhibits and incentives for reading.

-Telegram photo by Carleen Bell

Commissioners table 2012 budget approval

By Carleen Bell
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After hearing objections in a public hearing about the distribution of county funding for certain departments, the Norton County Commissioners postponed a final decision Monday morning to approve the county's 2012 budget.

On July 29, county officials published a proposed budget which includes a tax mill levy of 83.91 mills to comprise an overall budget of \$6,689,347.

The overall budget is broken into several funds and county departments, but more than half of the county budget goes for the general fund and for employee benefits.

One of the funds included the budget is a mill levy for the Norton County Hospital, which the proposed budget sets at 2.5 mills. That proposed levy, however, does not sit well with some hospital representatives.

Hospital Administrator Rich Miller voiced his frustration with the proposed budget at Monday's public hearing, specifically in how Norton County compares

to other counties across the state.

"It is a well-known fact and acknowledged by the commissioners that the hospital has one of the lowest mill rates in the state," Miller said. "Some county (hospitals) have levies at 14 mills. We are asking for four modest mills and how can you (the commissioners) in good conscience not work with us and support (the hospital) more than you have?"

Commissioners chair-woman Carolyn Applegate expressed her understanding of Miller's comments, but also explained that the commissioners are doing what they think best for the future of the community through supporting the Colby Community College partnership with the hospital.

"We put a lot on the line for the nursing school," Applegate said. "We have committed matching funds for that. We felt our nursing school was a greater good to the community in the long run. Our dollars are so dear right now and we thought we were doing what is best for the community in the long run."

Though the commissioners did not commit to increas-

ing the hospital's mill levy, they did agree to reduce some other expenditures and rearrange the budget while keeping the proposed mill levy at 83.91. Commissioner John Miller explained that he was "uncomfortable" with some parts of the budget proposal, including an increase in personnel expenditures for the county attorney and allowances for the emergency medical service and the county health department to purchase additional vehicles for their departments.

"I've been involved in discussion about what's going to happen at the state level," John Miller said. "I'm very concerned about state cuts will do to medicare and other programs and I think we're going to have to take a serious look at where our money goes. I don't know how to get around (budget cuts)."

John Mapes of Mapes and Miller agreed Monday morning to revise the proposed budget to reflect the requested changes in line item expenditures. The commissioners are slated to approve and adopt the budget at next Monday's weekly meeting.

Rural Opportunity Zone draws national interest

By Carleen Bell
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Less than three weeks after Norton County signed on to the program, county officials have reported that they have received 24 inquiries about the state's Rural Opportunity Zone program.

Norton City/County Economic Development Director Scott Sproul reported Monday that his office has received 24 inquiries about the program that encourages residents of other states to move to Kansas through financial incentives. At least four of the people interested in the program have ties to the area and are likely to relocate to Norton County.

Individuals interested in the program have surfaced in several states, including Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, Nebraska, Texas, Florida, Minnesota and even from as far away as Maine and New York.

The Rural Opportunity Zone, is comprised of the 50 counties, including Norton County, in Kansas that have lost more than 10 percent of their population since the last census. Issued by Governor Sam Brownback, the program took effect July 1.

Through the Rural Opportunity Zone, people who move into Kansas from out of state are eligible for tax rebates if they meet certain criteria. The most major piece of the requirements include a stipulation that the new residents must not have had more than \$10,000 worth of income from within Kansas.

If new residents meet the criteria, the incentive comes in the form of tax re-

bates where the citizens pay their taxes as usual, but are issued a state refund for what they pay.

A second part of the Rural Opportunity Zone legislation is an opportunity for counties to encourage population growth through a student loan repayment program. Sproul explained that counties can opt to pay a portion of student loans for students or graduates who move into the county from out of state.

The Norton County Commissioners opted into the program at the end of July and allocated \$40,000 for the program. With a wide interest in the program even in the initial stages, economic development officials are encouraging local employers to take steps to help make the program successful, especially by publicizing potential employment openings in their businesses.

When individuals interested in taking advantage of the program contact economic development, they are sent a packet of information about the county and are directed to discovernorton.com for extensive information about possible relocation to the area.

"In a way, we are playing match-maker," Sproul said. "If someone from another state is interested in a particular career, we can help match those individuals with employers in the area who have specific job openings to match those interests. We want to encourage employers to let us know when they have openings so we can encourage people to move to the county for those positions."

Racer dies in Elmwood crash

By Carleen Bell
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In an unexpected and tragic turn of events, a New Mexico man lost his life Saturday evening after crashing his motorcycle during the races at the Elmwood Park Speedway in Norton.

Few details of the incident were available Monday, but a race organizer reported that the man, whose name and age were unavailable, crashed his motorcycle on turn three at the track. The rider was transported to the Norton County Hospital for evaluation of what appeared to be non-life threatening injuries. Unconfirmed reports state that after the crash and before his death, the rider was coherent and talking to emergency medical responders. He passed away at the hospital, however, from what may have been internal chest injuries from the impact of the motorcycle landing on his body during the crash.

Council approves city budget for 2012 fiscal year

By Carleen Bell
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After hearing no public comment on the matter during a public hearing, the Norton City Council approved and adopted Monday evening a city budget for 2012.

On Aug. 5, the city officials published a proposed budget, which includes a mill levy of 58.163 mills, an increase of just under four mills from 2011.

The total city budget is broken into several different funds with a total of \$10,341,577 in expenditures. The mill levy is expected to generate \$663,081 of the overall budget.

The mill levy is based on assessed

property values within the city. The assessed valuation for 2012 is set at \$11,312,943. A mill represents 1/1000th of the assessed property values.

Finance committee chair Jeff Otter reported to the Council in July that the committee worked on the city's budget proposal for 2012. Otter explained that as they had been working on budget details, providing funding for everything they would like would demand an increase of 11 mills for city taxpayers. That increase, however, was too excessive and the four-mill increase was much more reasonable.

The new budget will take affect Jan. 1.

