

The Official Newspaper of the  
City of Heppner and the  
County of Morrow

**Heppner**  
**GAZETTE-TIMES**

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**Letters to the Editor**

**X-ray equipment not "state-of-the-art"**

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to Cheryl Rietmann's letter of Aug. 31. Her statement that the Boardman Health Care Center (BHCC) has "state-of-the-art" equipment is incorrect. I have worked at the clinic in Boardman for over 15 years. The x-ray equipment is over 17 years old, the same age as the equipment replaced recently at Pioneer Memorial Hospital. The laboratory equipment is over five years old, as is most of the other equipment. The dictionary defines "state-of-the-art" as "the current level of sophistication of a developing technology". While the clinic equipment has been adequate it is not "state-of-the-art".

I am hopeful that the county-wide Medical Board will have as its mandate quality care for all of the residents of Morrow County. In that endeavor I hope everyone keeps in mind the different needs of our communities.

The Pioneer Memorial Hospital and the clinic share many services thereby decreasing the cost, in overhead, to the Pioneer Memorial Clinic.

Here in Boardman the nearest X-ray and lab facilities are 25 miles away. Many times it saves the patient and the doctor time and money to have that X-ray or lab report during

a patient's visit. Diabetics, patients on coumadin or hypertensive medications can have results at their visits. The appropriate medicine adjustments can be discussed with the patient in person assuring their understanding of critical medication adjustments.

The BHCC lab, as in most single physician's offices, cannot make expenses. With the current federal requirements for licensing, proficiency and quality assurance, the BHCC lab is in the red. However, Dr. Boss requires this service for himself and his patients because he does not wish to compromise the care of his patients just because they live in a rural area.

Just as the physicians at PMH have provided continuity of quality health care to their community, so has Dr. Boss. Dr. Boss has established himself in Boardman. He has provided the longest term of service in the history of the clinic and provides service to both the Hispanic and Caucasian community as he is bilingual.

It's time now with the new Medical District for all of us to provide all of our communities with quality medical care meeting each community's needs and desires.

(s) Sharron Meyers, RN  
Boardman

**Doesn't north end deserve the best**

To the Editor:

In regard to a recent letter to the editor, I would like to present the following facts regarding the Boardman Health Care Center:

In the last 17 years the Boardman clinic has seen over 20-plus physicians come and go. Dr. Boss has been here the longest of any physician, coming here in May 1990. He chose to come here and wishes to continue here. Rural physicians are hard to find today, let alone keep.

Prior to Dr. Boss, many patients left the area for their health care due to the ever-changing physicians and lack of continuity of health care. Because of Dr. Boss this has changed. Patients have now returned and are once again obtaining their medical care locally. This was not a feat that happened overnight. It has taken a lot of work and time to build this practice.

Yes, Dr. Boss receives \$130,000 per year to run and operate the Boardman clinic. It is then his responsibility to pay staff, utilities, supplies, malpractice, retirement and maintain equipment. There has been no increase in the amount since 1990. However, expenses have increased and our physician and assistant are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for which they receive no remuneration. I ask what are we paying the three physicians and dentist in Heppner. Do our physician and the people in the north end of the county deserve less?

Almost all of the "state-of-the-art" equipment at the Boardman clinic was purchased by Dr. Boss years ago. Most of that equipment would not be considered up to date state-of-the-art. The current X-ray machine is over 17 years old, which is the same age of the X-ray machine the hospital just replaced. I believe that machine was considered inadequate and an antique.

Dr. Boss' accountant provided the financial information that the auditors requested. Dr. Boss would not agree to giving them his personal income taxes which are totally irrelevant to the operation of Boardman Health Care Center. Dr. Boss is an independent contractor. If his is to be audited, then why aren't we auditing the other independent contractors? The

Health District is currently paying almost a quarter million dollars for a management contract and computer services.

The board member that resigned from the Medical District was filling an elected position representing the people of this community. It only makes sense for this community by way of the Chamber and city council to endorse the person they felt best qualified to replace him. The board ignored the Boardman community's desire as reflected by the Chamber and city council endorsement in this matter.

Over half the population (and still growing) is in the north end of the county. Approximately 50 percent of the patients seen at the Boardman clinic are either on Medicare or Welfare. Due to managed care there have been some drastic changes in the last two years concerning reimbursement. Additionally, the clinic is a preferred provider for HMO, Blue Cross, PACC, Qual Med and Railroad. As a preferred provider, we take a write-off (collecting only 70-90 percent of the billing) on all of these office visits. This is a mandatory part of a medical clinic's business if we are to be available for our patients who have these insurances. Lastly, workers' compensation does not reimburse at the 100 percent rate either. Indeed, current pending legislation will lower the reimbursement to the current Medicare and Welfare fee schedule. These changes have greatly reduced the clinic revenue-generating ability while increasing the cost of operating.

I hope this answers some questions but one question I have is does not the north end of the county also deserve the best medical care possible? I also feel the treatment of Mr. Glenn was totally cruel and uncalled for as we all deserve the right to our opinion. If you have that much time and energy on your hands maybe you should volunteer at the hospital and nursing home as I'm sure volunteers are always needed and appreciated.

In the future please ask if you have a question as Morrow County does deserve good quality medical care both in the north and south.

Respectfully,  
(s) Kathy Cash  
Boardman

**Communities need quality medical care**

To the Editor:

This letter is in regards to the X-ray facility at Boardman Health Care Center. I am currently the radiology supervisor here and am in charge of making sure the machine and processor meet Oregon standards and that all of our films are acceptable. I have worked at three different hospitals and several clinics and believe I know what is generally thought of to be an optimal, desired X-ray machine/room ("state-of-the-art") and what is thought to be just adequate (not "state-of-the-art"). The machine currently in use at Boardman is a 1978 General Electric single phase machine. In simple terms, this means it is 17 years old and definitely not "state-of-the-art".

Although our machine is antiquated, it is serving a great purpose for the people of north Morrow County. The closest X-ray facility is 25 miles away. That is too far away when an x-ray is needed to confirm or diagnose a patient when they are in our office. As many of you know, having the X-ray equipment in the office saves you, the patient, time and energy. I don't think any of you want to drive to Hermiston every time an X-ray is needed.

Our physician, Dr. Boss, and physician assistant, Mr. Carabba, demand high quality of care for their patients and you, the patient, shouldn't expect anything less. Why would you want to go somewhere for health care if a facility doesn't have the lab and X-ray necessary to diagnose and treat you?

Of course the X-ray machine with its maintenance and problems probably doesn't pay for itself. We have had two field engineers from G.E. to work on the machine for recurring problems of alignment. This is very costly and wouldn't be necessary for a "state-of-the-art" X-ray machine. I would also like to point out that the X-ray machine replaced at Pioneer Memorial Hospital was approximately the same age as ours. I have to wonder, as I hope all of north Morrow County does, why Pioneer Memorial Hospital is more deserving of a new X-ray machine than Boardman Health Care Center is.

I really hope everyone reading the articles about the Morrow County health care issues are actually thinking about what is written and said and asking questions. This is your health care center at stake. If having a new physician every five years is what you want. If it isn't, speak up and let the medical district know.

(s) Melissa South, R.T.  
(R) A.R.R.T.  
160 Elmonte  
Umatilla

**Justice Court Report**

The Justice Court office at the courthouse annex building in Heppner reports handling the following business during the past week:

Shari Lynn Stahl, 29, Lexington-Exceeding the Maximum Speed Limit, 68 mph in a 55 mph zone, \$107 fine;  
Jessie J. Jefferys, 25, Lexington-two counts, Driving While Suspended, Driving While Uninsured, Failure to Change Name/Address on Driver's License, Exceeding the Maximum Speed Limit, 79 mph in a 55 mph zone, \$1,094 fine;  
Jessica Stefani, 18, Ione-Minor In Possession, \$131 fine;  
Lorene Evivian Papineau, 35, Lexington-Exceeding the Maximum Speed Limit, 72 mph in a 55 mph zone, \$102 fine;  
Michael Eugene Lairmore, 41, Welches-Exceeding the Maximum Speed Limit, 72 mph in a 55 mph zone, \$67 fine.

**Marriage Licenses**

The Morrow County Clerk's office at the courthouse in Heppner reports issuing the following marriage license during the past week:

Sept. 12: Raul M. Ramos, 21, Ione; and  
Jennifer C. Martinez, 18, Ione.

**St. Pat's to begin religious program**

St. Patrick's Parish will begin their High School Religious Education and Youth Ministry Program on Wednesday, Sept. 27.

The program will begin with a kick-off dinner at the parish hall at 6 p.m. Following the dinner, there will be an evening of prayer and meditation. All high school students who wish to grow in faith are welcome to attend, said Fr. Gerry Condon. Their parents are also invited to join them both for the dinner and the evening of prayer.

Those interested should register with Fr. Condon at 676-9462 by Sunday, Sept. 24.

**Chamber Chatter**

By Claudia Hughes, Chamber Manager

Individuals make a big difference and we all have the ability to do just that this week, be it the Willow Creek Park District hearing, the vote for recreation for our Morrow County youth, or the future of the Ag/History museum. It's important to be heard, to respect the ideas of others and to listen to all sides of the topic. One never knows when a chance idea will cause great things to happen in our community.

Have you stopped by the former GEODC/Chamber office to share your knowledge of history, artifacts and ideas for the Ag/History museum planned for the former Morrow County Grain Growers elevator? This is a project that will be here for generations.

What an opportunity to educate visitors and our descendants on the history of agriculture as well as the current process, especially folks who believe food comes from the grocery. Envision visitors seeing all the antique equipment, photos of it operating; history of the family farms; small rooms depicting the homes people lived in; a working grist mill; by-products of our cattle, sheep, wheat, timber; hands-on experiences; a small stage for entertainment and historians; made in Morrow County products; farm tours, etc.

You may disagree with some of the mentioned ideas and you may have your own ideas, but regardless, it's an opportunity for the entire community to work together to help the economy and leave a historic path behind. Let's create something special to tie in with our new Main Street, sidewalks and beautiful historic courthouse. It's a project in which all generations can become involved with pride. Drop by today or tomorrow and be a part of the decision making process.

Next week at Chamber: Scott Sawyer with our new phone company PTI and a discussion of allotment grazing recommendations.

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**\$1,000 REWARD**  
for the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for taking wire, steel posts and stock panels from the Roach Ranch.

Contact Roy Drago, County Sheriff  
Morrow County 676-5317

**Market Report**  
Compliments of the Morrow County Grain Growers

Tuesday, Sept. 19		
Soft White		
Sept.		\$4.98
Oct.	\$5.02/\$5.05	
Nov.	\$5.06/\$5.08	
Dec.	\$5.09/\$5.11	
Jan.	\$5.12/\$5.14	
Barley		
Sept.-Dec.		\$116