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Gazette Times

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Health district to restore nursing home program with first patient

Morrow County Health District CEO Victor Vander Does announced at the MCHD meeting in Heppner Monday night that the district will proceed with its swing bed, long-term care program. "We're going to admit a patient to long-term care," said Vander Does. Molly Rhea, R.N., director of nursing, Home Health and Hospice, stressed that the particular patient to be admitted to long-term care was a special case that fit the program's criteria.

Vander Does said that the district plans to bring back up to 10 long-term care (nursing home) beds. He said that some remodeling will be needed, including the dining and activity areas, and refurbishing two bathrooms to American Disabilities Act requirements.

The district closed its nursing home several years ago when it became financially impossible to continue its operation. The district was not reimbursed from Medicaid enough to cover its costs.

The state recently approved a new program that will allow reimbursement at a rate that will be financially feasible for the district to provide nursing home care, said Vander Does.

Vander Does said that MCHD is the very first facility in the state to go with the newly-approved program. "Since it took the state such a long time to work this out, we need to push this very aggressively," said Vander Does. "So we're going to admit a patient to long-term care and let them (the state) figure out how to catch up.

Physician Dale Alter was introduced at the Monday meeting. Dr. Alter, who has worked for the district a short while, will provide emergency room care at Pioneer Memorial Hospital and primary care at Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner on a locums basis until his credentialing is approved.

"I've been enjoying working here very much," said Alter, who currently lives in Albany. 'For a small hospital, it has really good diagnostic equipment." He also commented on how much he enjoyed working with the staff and patients.

Also at the meeting, the board approved up to $21,000 for a physician recruiting firm, Time Line Recruiting, to search for doctors to work at the hospital and clinic. "Recruitment is very difficult," said Vander Does. "Things are not looking good for rural recruitment." He said that he expected it would take a while to recruit. "The lifestyle issue has always been an issue," concurred board Chair Larry Mills, acknowledging that many physicians and their families prefer an urban rather than rural setting. Board member Linda LaRue summed up the board's thinking in approving the expenditure, saying, "A good recruiting firm is very much worth it. It's something that takes time away from your (Vander Does') duties."

MCHD Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney reported another good bottom line for the month. The district ended with a $27,784 gain for February and a $48,350 profit for the year for a $6,044 average monthly gain. The district had $427,945 in gross patient revenue for the month. Mahoney and Vander Does said that March's gross patient revenue could even top a half a million.

In other business, the board:

-received a letter from Columbia River Health Services, a Boardman non-profit clinic serving migrants and the general population, that they will begin their audit in April. CRHS receives some financial support from MCHD. The board plans to meet with CRHS soon thereafter. Vander Does said that he has learned that CRHS has been successful in recruiting a physician after searching for some time.

-heard a report from Rhea who said that the district's Home Health program received one of the highest awards from the Oregon Association for Home Care at a presentation in Salem on March 16.

-received thanks from Irrigon Clinic Physician's Assistant Terry Anderson, who is leaving the district for employment elsewhere. Nurse Practitioner Sue Peeples will provide care at the Irrigon Clinic.

-heard concerns from a long-term MCHD patient whose physician had left the district for another job. The patient requested a transfer to another physician within the district, but said she was told by office staff that that particular physician was not taking "new patients." Vander Does and Mahoney assured her that this was not the case and stressed that the issue will be resolved. "The sole purpose of this organization is to serve the public," Mills emphasized.

-heard the following report for February: Pioneer Memorial Clinic had 389 patients with 19 new patients and 38 seen by a nurse; Irrigon Clinic had 189 patients with 32 new patients, 41 seen by a nurse and 18 no shows; Heppner Ambulance had 17 page-outs and 14 transports for $18,886 in revenue, Boardman Ambulance had 28 page-outs and 11 transports for $10,968 in revenue, Irrigon had 14 page-outs and eight transports with $7,262 in revenue, there were three flights; Pioneer Memorial Hospital had six admissions, 20 were admitted for observation, hospital respite had one admission, there were 398 outpatients, 72 emergency room encounters, 1463 lab tests, 76 x-ray procedures, 21 CT scans, 24 EKG tests, 63 respiratory therapy procedures; PMH had $28,979 in revenue for hospital encounters; Home Health had 166 visits; Hospice had six admissions; the pharmacy had 1401 drug doses for $66,241 in revenue.

Register by May 1 for alumni football game

Registration for the first annual alumni football game is May 1, says organizer Jess Osmin. The game is scheduled for June 16, 2007. Depending on the response, two games are planned, younger vs. younger, and older vs. older. If there are not enough players, a blue vs. white game will be played.

A fee of $20 will be charged for those wishing to participate. This fee will cover the use of facilities and equipment, and a t-shirt. There will be a small charge at the gate that will be used to purchase a trophy to be passed on from year to year. The remaining money will be donated to the football program.

Anyone wishing to participate can send a check made out to Jess Osmin and their t-shirt size to 58794 Balmfork Rd., Heppner, OR 97836 no later than May 1, 2007. Also, please send your phone number, the year you graduated, and the position you played in school.

For more information contact Osmin at 541-676-9079. Anyone interested in officiating the game or working the chains is also asked to call. Enough interest must be shown by May 1 or the game will have to be called off.

Teams will be announced on Friday, June 15, 2007, and a practice walkthrough will be held. Participants are asked to bring both jerseys to this practice. If a player does not have a jersey, Greg Grant will allow use of practice jerseys for the game.

Ione Kindergarten studying butterflies, raising chicks

Back row (L-R): Gracie Crum, Candise Walton, Logan Burright, and Jacob Owen. Bottom row (L-R): Renee Peterson, Payton Miller, and Deborah Ruiz.

The Ione Kindergarten class has been studying metamorphosis in butterflies. Starting with tiny larva, kindergartners watched them grow into large caterpillars, saw the caterpillars build a chrysalis and hope to see the butterflies emerge to fly around in their tower. Students hope to be sending them off on our playground soon after spring break.

The students are also incubating chicken eggs. Some of the eggs surprised the class with an early arrival. "How exciting it was to hear their sound one morning as we began school," said Barb Collin, kindergarten teacher. "The kids were so excited to watch the chicks actually break out of their shells!" Kindergarteners watched as the chicks dried, gained strength and began to walk. The amazed faces of the students as they watched were priceless. During the science fair, at our school this week, our exhibits were a big hit. The chicks were held, petted, and given much love, by many little hands.

Dr. Michael Cummings, Geology Department Chair at Portland State University, works with small schools in our area and the class was able to benefit from some of the grant money that he works with. Mrs. Collin wrote and was awarded a federal grant, which helps school districts bridge the gap of mandated federal programs of the No Child Left Behind Act.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Inspirational Easter messages wanted

All area pastors are asked to please turn in an inspirational Easter message and church events calendar to the Heppner Gazette-Times. The messages are due by Monday, April 2, at 5 p.m. and can be dropped off, mailed, or emailed. The messages will be published on Wednesday, April 4.

Electric co-op announces retirement and promotion

Columbia Basin Electric Cooperative is pleased to announce that Slater D. Mitchell has been promoted to succeed Archie Ball as the co-op's operations manager. Mitchell, a journeyman lineman, has been employed with the co-op for 12 years, most recently as the assistant operations manager. Mitchell, who was raised in Heppner, his wife Darcee and their three children reside in Heppner.

Slater D. Mitchell

Archie Ball retired after more than 26 years of service to Columbia Basic Electric. "It's going to be real difficult to make-up for Archie's knowledge of the system," stated a co-op representative. "He knew the back roads, where people live, where the lines run, and where the trouble spots are. We're going to miss him!" Ball retired on February 28, 2007.

Pink flamingos in Heppner

Heppner needs new speakers on Main Street. To that end, the Heppner Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a new fundraiser. Soon you will start to see a flock of pink flamingos appear all over town. If they appear in your yard, you must pay at least $5 to have them removed to another yard. (You can pay more, if you wish, although the Chamber has decided to put a cap of $25 on each payment.) The next step is to pick a friend or neighbor that you would like to see receive the "flock." When making your decision, please be considerate of the recipient. We don't want to make anyone angry and we don't want anyone to feel obligated to pay.

The Chamber office will keep track of the "flock" recipients, so that no one has to tend to the flamingos twice. So, please call the Chamber to inquire about the list and to have the birds removed from your yard. We also ask that the flamingos stay within Heppner city limits. This is a great way to raise money for new speakers and for those who want to participate to have fun. The first recipient will find the flock in their yard on Monday, April 2.

At the MCGG GREEN FEED STORE in Heppner:

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