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New treatment facility running 'smoothly' says administrator

By David Sykes

Less than a week after its official opening, the Lakeview Heights Secure Residential Treatment Facility is running smoothly and already has five of its eight residents living there, facility administrator Matt Bergstrom told the Gazette-Times last week.

"We have five residents, two more identified and by the first week of April should be at capacity," Bergstrom said. He also said things are running fairly smoothly and the entire staff of 21 has been hired. "For a new operation I would say things are going pretty good with no major problems," Bergstrom added.

Of the 21 people, most are from the area, and the facility has been coming through on its promise to shop locally. "We have been purchasing all of our groceries and medications locally," Bergstrom says. "We have spent about $5,000 since we started and only about $150 has been spent out of town on things we could not get locally."

Residents have been venturing out into the community with a weekly trip into town and that has gone well. An "explorer" group has also gone to Hardman and Cutsforth Park to go fishing. The group is looking forward to going to Willow Creek Lake. He said the trips are, of course, always chaperoned by staff.

He said all the residents have been to the local medical clinic for a check up when they arrive here. Wood on Wood, a local woodworking business, has donated wood to the facility because the residents wanted to make bird houses, and staff is working on some art projects for them also.

There are also two beds at the facility that can be used by local people who are having problems, and that has been used since opening about 50 percent of the time, Bergstrom said.

Bergstrom says he expects the equine therapy (where residents take care of horses at the facility) should begin at the end of May or first of June.

They are working now on completing the landscaping around the facility, and the residents will be tending a garden on the grounds behind the facility inside the fence.

Kelly Jo Keithly was working in the kitchen putting away groceries with Robert Hubbell at the time of the Gazette-Times visit last Thursday, and she said breakfast is served at 8 a.m., lunch at noon and dinner at 5 p.m. She said the meal for that day was Swiss steak, chicken, a vegetable and dessert.

Lakeview Heights Secure Residential Treatment Facility employee Kelly Jo Keithly arranges plants by the window while administrator Matt Bergstrom looks on. The residents at the facility have a small indoor garden that they are tending to before the larger garden outside is installed. Keithly works in the kitchen at the facility planning and fixing meals. *-Photo by David Sykes*

Health district board sets goals, strategic plans

By April Sykes

The Morrow County Health District Board Monday night reviewed the district's draft mission statement that they had formulated at an earlier work session that involved the board, administration, department heads and providers.

The district set its mission as "Working together to provide excellence in healthcare"; its vision to "Be the first choice for quality, compassionate care and lead the way in promoting wellness and improving health in Morrow County"; and its values to be "Integrity, compassion, quality, respect, teamwork and financial responsibility". The district's strategic goals included: "Attract, retain and engage high quality team members"; "Meet the needs of our county by providing superior local healthcare services and by being involved in the care our patients receive from other providers"; "Ensure the continued viability of our services through diligent financial stewardship"; and "Continuously develop and enhance our reputation in our communities".

Board Chair Larry Mills and board member Linda LaRue said they believed the district was "on the right track" and "headed in the right direction."

During the meeting, the board reviewed data that correlated the number of admissions and the number of patients with their zip codes to get a broader understanding of the district's demographics.

They also approved Pioneer Memorial Home Health's annual evaluation for 2009 and commended new director, Robanai Disque, who took over as director of Home Health when Molly Rhea stepped down to concentrate on her position as director of nursing services. "We did a good job of following up on our deficiencies," Disque said of the government review of Home Health operations. "We do a good job of meeting the needs of our community."

Also at the meeting, the board:

-discussed the Pioneer Memorial Hospital Foundation as a way for people who wish to donate to the facility, perhaps in wills, suggested memorial donations or other bequests.

-heard from CEO Michael Blauer and Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney that they did not believe President Obama's health care reform would be a detriment to the district. "I don't think we'll see a great impact or a great benefit," said board Mills.

-learned from Blauer that the redo of bathrooms at Pioneer Memorial Clinic has been completed and that progress has been made on painting rooms, with flooring installation to begin the first of next week.

-learned from Blauer that a physician's assistant has been hired for the Irrigon Clinic. Dr. Kenneth Wenberg has been providing coverage for the clinic since the previous provider resigned.

-received the following profit/loss statement for February: the district had $511,873 in gross patient revenue with $72,351 in total revenue deductions, $95,521 in tax revenue and $2,942 in other operating revenue for $537,942 in total operating revenue; $562,260 in total operating expenses and $8,456 in a non-operating gain for a $15,862 loss for the month. The district had a $3,469 average monthly year-to-date gain.

-received the following report for February: Pioneer Memorial Clinic had 499 patient visits with 35 new patients, 47 seen by a nurse and four no-shows; Irrigon Medical Clinic had 191 patient visits with 22 new patients, 38 seen by a nurse and eight no shows; Heppner Ambulance had 19 total page-outs with 16 transports for $19,100 in revenue; Boardman Ambulance had 19 page-outs with 10 transports for $10,589 in revenue; Irrigon Ambulance had 19 page-outs with eight transports for $8,022 in revenue; there were three flights; Pioneer Memorial Hospital had five admissions, one swing bed admission, nine admissions for observation, two swing nursing facility admissions, 461 total outpatients with 54 emergency room encounters, 1706 lab tests, 98 x-ray procedures, 22 CT scans, 24 EKG tests, two treadmill procedures, five colonoscopy procedures, two endoscopy procedures, 73 respiratory therapy procedures; Home Health had 128 patient visits; Hospice had one admission; pharmacy had 1057 drug doses for $51,414 in drug revenue.

Candidates to discuss issues at public forum

The public is invited to a candidates' forum Sunday, April 11, starting at 2 p.m. at the Heppner High School Cafeteria.

Candidates running for Governor, State Representative, District Attorney, Justice of the Peace, Morrow County Judge and County Commissioner will be on hand to answer questions from the public.

The forum will be moderated by local attorney Bill Kuhn, and is sponsored by the Willow Creek Tea Party Patriots.

Studded tire season ends Thursday morning, April 1

Oregon Department of Transportation is not planning to extend the studded tire season past 12:01 am Thursday morning, April 1, 2010. Motorists should remove their studded tires by then. ODOT is working closely with the Washington State Department of Transportation, which is announcing the same decision.

ODOT encourages drivers to consider other types of traction tires or chains because studded tires cause at least $11 million damage each year on city streets, county roads and state highways. Other types of traction tires are available. These traction tires meet Rubber Manufacturers Association standards for use in severe snow conditions and carry a special symbol on the tire sidewall showing a three-peaked mountain and snowflake. Research shows these tires provide better traction than studded tires when used on bare pavement.

Drivers with studded tires on their vehicles in Oregon after the deadline can be charged with a Class C traffic violation, which currently carries a minimum $190 fine.

Visit www.TripCheck.com or call 511 for the latest road conditions.

Tractor accident nearly severs boys arm

According to the Morrow County Sheriff's Office, an eight-year-old boy was air lifted to St. Charles Medical Center in Bend last Wednesday, March 24, after his arm was nearly severed in a tractor accident.

The child's arm became caught while he was helping his father work on the tractor. His arm was nearly severed between the shoulder and the elbow.

After calling EMS, the father administered first aid until help arrived.

As of press time on Tuesday, no new information was available.

South Willow Creek Valley Strategic Plan meeting scheduled

A combined South Willow Creek Valley Strategic Plan meeting will be held April 7 at 7 p.m. at Heppner City Hall.

This will be the first meeting in a three-meeting series for a Combined Strategic Plan designed to bring the communities of Heppner, Ione and Lexington together to further define common community threads and enhance work done in the recently updated strategic plans.

For further information, please contact Karen Kendall/GEODC at 541-276-6745 or Sheryll Bates/WCVEDG and 541-676-5536. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP no later than Tuesday, April 6.

Boat explosion injures Heppner couple

Rodger and Judy Chastain of the Heppner area were injured when a boat they were on exploded Friday, March 26. Arvin Nicholson of Kennewick, WA, was also injured in the explosion.

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office River Patrol, Port of Portland, Portland Fire & Rescue, and the Coast Guard responded to reports of a boat on fire with three people in the water. Reports indicated that the victims were pulling the boat away from the dock after fueling when it exploded.

According to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, the victims were thrown from the boat, two being rescued immediately while the third person became trapped in debris. All three were rescued from the water by nearby boaters and bystanders on the dock. They were transported to Emanuel Hospital in Portland.

According to the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, Rodger Chastain was treated and released while Judy Chastain was listed in fair condition. Nicholson was listed in critical condition in the ICU unit.

Multnomah County River Patrol and Multnomah County Dive Team were raising the boat as part of the ongoing investigation. The investigation will be completed by the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office and Portland Fire & Rescue.

Crystal Apple deadline this Thursday

The deadline to submit nominations for a Crystal Apple Award or Doug Flatt Memorial Leadership Award (for administrators) is this Thursday, April 1, at 4:30 p.m. Nominations can be made online: www.umesd.k12.or.us/crystalapple and click on the green "nominations" tab at the top of the page.

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