

NEWS BRIEFS

Informational Newsletter for Wyoming Hospitals

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WHA Calendar:

Wyoming Critical Access Hospital Network 1/24

Other Events:

State Issues Forum Washington, DC 1/18

Wyoming Legislature Convenes 2/13

Officials Unveil Plan for Health Insurance Exchange *From the Wyoming Business Report*

State officials have unveiled a tentative plan to set up a health insurance exchange program in Wyoming to try to stave off a federally run health insurance exchange system under the Affordable Care Act.

Elizabeth Hoy, Gov. Matt Mead's health policy adviser, and state Rep. Elaine Harvey, chair of the House Labor, Health and Social Services Committee, noted that the governor has joined other states in opposing the controversial federal health care reform act.

However, they said that if the federal act is upheld by the Supreme Court or the results of the 2012 election, Wyoming wants to have its own plan in development rather than be governed by a federal plan.

"It's a Catch-22," said Harvey, R-Lovell.

The women presented the tentative plan to a somewhat skeptical audience in Cody last Tuesday night at a public hearing. It was the first of five scheduled around the state in coming weeks to hear what Wyoming residents believe the state's role should be, if any, in facilitating insurance exchanges.

Judging from comments and murmurs from the crowd

of about 75 at the Park County Library, the federal mandate requiring everyone to have either private or government health insurance remains unpopular in Wyoming, though it has its supporters.

Yet there was head nodding when Hoy and Harvey said a state-run health insurance exchange would work better in Wyoming than a federally operated program.

"Our overarching goal," Hoy told the audience, "is to improve the value of health care for people" by improving quality and reducing costs.

Harvey described health insurance exchanges as "basically a website" where people can get accurate information about various health insurance options and compare costs.

"It's like a farmers' market where you can squeeze the tomatoes and smell the cucumbers ... and compare the price and the quality," she said.

"We do think an exchange will help people be better informed about insurance," Harvey added.

But some in the audience were wary of any federal involvement in health care, including Cody attorney Ray

DiLorenzo, who berated the state for considering accepting federal money to implement a state health insurance exchange.

"We can do it ourselves," he said, adding that if 26 states refuse to accept the ACA, "it will die of its own accord." Bob Berry described himself as one of the 83,000 Wyoming residents without any health insurance and said he has cancer, but he doesn't believe the government, state or federal, should be involved in health care.

But Susan Woods of Cody said, "For good or ill, the federal government already is heavily involved in health care. But we are the only industrialized country in the world that does not have a national plan."

Others offered practical advice for the two state officials, suggesting that any insurance program should make sure that coverage extends across state borders, where many Wyoming residents are taken for specialty care.

Hoy and Harvey said they will report back to the governor and legislators after the hearings, and they noted that neither Mead nor the Legislature has yet agreed to any plan. Dates for the upcoming hearings have not been announced.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Don't forget to send us a story about your hospital so we can feature you in our Member Spotlight section!



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JCHC Competition Lifts Employees', Patients' Spirits

Each year, employees at Johnson County Health Care in Buffalo participate in a competition to decorate the doors leading to different service areas.

It's a bit of a break from the day-to-day routine in the hospital, and it gives patients a lift.

And this year's theme, 'Frosty's Winterland', brought out the creative side in a number of employees.

Laundry Manager Teresa Bartlett said it took about a

week to construct their snowman. One day to develop the idea of a snowman made of old mattress pads, four days to gather materials, and two days to build it – all done outside of their normal work hours.

The laundry crew won the award for best use of the year's theme.

But the door that generated the most buzz was created by the people in central supply. It featured an elf, Rudolph and Santa sitting in

a hot tub – with a carrot floating on the surface of the water and Santa saying, "Whose idea was it to invite Frosty over to our hot tub?"

The competition helps hospital workers get into the holiday spirit, but the patients benefit as well. Patients who roam the halls laugh at one door and stop to admire the artwork on another.

"It just gives everyone a little lift," Rossi said.

WHRN Hires Fecht as New Executive Director

The Wyoming Health Resources Network has hired Robert Fecht of Cheyenne as its new Executive Director.

Mr. Fecht took over on January 2, filling the opening left by the retirement of former Executive Director Pennie Hunt. Ms. Hunt had led the organization for more than eight years.

WHRN specializes in recruiting healthcare professionals to Wyoming and

works directly with Wyoming's hospitals to help meet their recruiting needs.

Mr. Fecht is well known in Cheyenne as the former Chief of the Cheyenne Police Department, and as a former member of the Wyoming Senate.

He has also been very active in numerous nonprofits, including the Cheyenne Animal Shelter, the United Way, and the Chey-

enne Symphony Orchestra.

"I am very excited about this position and the opportunity to serve you and work for the betterment of the state of Wyoming," Fecht said.

"If there is anything you believe we can do to assist you in bettering the medical services provided in Wyoming ... please contact me at your convenience."

Mr. Fecht can be reached at WHRN at (307) 635-2930.

Trauma Program Offers Training for New Instructors

Wyoming's State Trauma Program has announced that it is sponsoring a training program to develop additional regional trauma instructors.

Trauma coordinators from across the state have identified a need for additional instructors, and funding from the Hospital Preparedness Program has been allocated to help alleviate that problem.

In the past, nurses have had difficulty accessing the

training because of the cost, and because of a lack of instructors. The HPP grant is meant to help resolve that issue as well.

Under the grant, the Wyoming Trauma Program will pay for the course and travel expenses for those who attend the courses.

Training will be scheduled for the end of March, and will include a 2-day provider course and a 1-day instructor course for up to 18 participants. State spon-

sors are seeking nurses from each of the state's five trauma regions to attend the training.

Participating nurses must be willing to subsequently help coordinate and teach courses in their regions.

Nominations for participants should be submitted to Lisa Van Brunt, at Lisa.VanBrunt@mail.hscmh.org as soon as possible. Contact Ms. Van Brunt at (307) 864-3221 for more information.