

Town nursing home set to close

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 14 July 2011 20:54 -

VHS: Services to discontinue at Heritage of Wauneta

By Josh Sumner

The Wauneta Breeze

Vetter Health Services (VHS), owners of Heritage of Wauneta, announced its intentions of closing the Wauneta nursing home facility after a special meeting with Heritage staff and families last Wednesday.

“It is with a heavy heart that we are making this announcement,” said VHS President Glenn Van Ekeren in a press release last Wednesday.

The news has rippled through Wauneta in the week following the announcement, as Heritage employees, residents and their families are being faced with the stark reality of reevaluating the future.

VHS issued a press release last Wednesday, stating that the closing of the facility will occur no later than June 30, 2012.

According to the press release, “Residents, families and staff will receive sixty days notice before the operation ends. Until then, the facility will continue to operate ‘business as usual,’ as long as we have staff to provide the quality of care that we are known for, and an adequate number of residents to serve.”

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A decline in the need for skilled nursing beds in the community, coupled with the high price of installing a federally-mandated sprinkler system, are the two main reasons VHS cites as the basis for its decision.

If the closure does indeed take place, 30 residents will lose their home, and approximately 60 employees will be out of a job. As ominous as last week's announcement may have been, there does seem to be hope that the nursing home will keep its doors open.

"If the town or someone else decided they wanted to put up the money to buy the facility and put in the sprinkler system, yes, we could feasibly remain open," said Heritage of Wauneta Administrator Lisa Kisinger.

The cost of such a purchase, and the subsequent installation of a sprinkler system, would come with a high price tag. Kisinger estimates the cost of the sprinkler system alone at \$300,000. The building itself was valued at \$1,130,000, according to the Chase County Assessor.

Still, regardless of the cost, community members are banding together in an effort to save Heritage of Wauneta.

Those with loved-ones residing at Heritage appear to be keeping faith, too. LeDene Clapp, whose father Leland DeHart and aunt Ethel Louch both currently live at Heritage of Wauneta, said she is in no hurry to move her dad.

"Right now we're sitting tight because the community is working very hard to keep this facility open," said Clapp. "I'm not going to rush to take my dad out of his home."

Clapp, whose grandmother, mother and uncle also previously lived at Heritage, said it's the quality of the caregivers that make the nursing home such a great facility.

"The workers give loving care to everyone who lives there," said Clapp.

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To say Heritage of Wauneta's future is uncertain is an understatement. Despite the bad news, the staff continues to provide its residents with the love they've come to expect.

"It's not been easy," said Kisinger. "We'll get by, I guess, one day at a time."

Be sure to stay informed on this important community story by following future issues of The Breeze, including coverage of Tuesday evening's Wauneta Village Board meeting, in which solutions for saving Heritage were addressed.