By Sheri Hink

The Wauneta Breeze

The purchase of the Wauneta nursing home by the village has been a labor of love for several village board members as well as community volunteers the past several months.

This weekend, all their work will pay off when the nursing home changes hands. The nursing home will be purchased by the Village of Wauneta from Vetter Health Services effective Sunday, July 1.

The Village board has been planning towards a transition to village ownership since Vetter Health Services announced they would cease operation of the nursing home after June 2012.

Heritage of Wauneta's President, Jack Vetter, stated, "It has been a privilege to serve the families and residents in the Wauneta area over the past 29 years. We are especially grateful to the staff and for the service, care, and love they have given to the residents."

"As I hand off ownership to the Village of Wauneta, I do so with confidence. I trust that the reputation of Heritage will live on and grow. My prayer is on-going 'quality of care' for every senior and individual in the community that will use its services," said Vetter.

Representatives of the Village Board echoed Mr. Vetter's sentiments. "Our community is grateful for the enduring contribution Heritage has made to the quality of life in Wauneta. We extend a sincere thank you to Mr. Vetter and to his entire organization for their gracious cooperation in this transition of ownership. It is our prayer, too, that with our support the staff will

be able to continue delivering the 'quality of care' which has become their trademark."

The funding which made the village's purchase of the home came from three distinct sources.

First, local and local-at-heart individual and corporate donors contributed $240,525, according to the clerk's report at the June Village board meeting.

The second source of revenue for the project is $150,000 in Village of Wauneta funds.

The final source of funding is $500,000 in revenue bonds.

These three funding sources accumulated the $890,525 for the purchase and initial operation expenses of the nursing home.

Nursing home committee member Page Johnston says the village board hopes the transition from VHS to village ownership will be low-key and seamless for

residents and staff alike. The transition of ownership will happen this weekend minus fanfare, keeping things "business as usual" for the 33 nursing home residents and 60 staff members. Lisa Kisinger will continue as administrator after the transition to village ownership.

History of Wauneta's Nursing Home

The nursing home has operated as Heritage of Wauneta, owned by Vetter Health Services

since 1983.

Prior to VHS's purchase of the nursing home in 1983 it was owned by Frenchman Valley Development Corporation. Elaine Hink served as administrator of the nursing home during its transition from Kinder Kare to Heritage of Wauneta.

The current facility was completed in January 1971. A Breeze article by G. B. Crapson states, "Kinder Kare Nursing Home will be a $397,000 project when finished, built and financed. And it is built entirely on a private enterprise basis."

At the opening of the new Kinder Kare facility in mid-January 1971, it was home to 29 residents with the expectation of three more to arrive shortly after the move. At the time of the move the facility was managed by Oscar Deines.

But, the nursing home's history doesn't start in 1971. Prior to that, the old nursing home, Barnes Nursing Home, was purchased by Leroy and Bunnie Jussel and Berneta (Bert) and the late Bernie Steinert in 1963.

The Jussels and Steinerts spearheaded the process of building the new facility, the one soon to have its third name, Sunrise Heights of Wauneta.

They sold bonds to finance the building of the new facility. When Kinder Kare was sold to Vetter Health Services they paid off their debts and maintained $100,000 profit.

The profit made from the sale continues to be invested into the community through the Frenchman Valley Development Group today.