

Wagner

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everything that has moved forward in this community during the last four years."

Slaba's recognition doesn't surprise Rhani Resuello, chair of the hospital's nominating committee that submitted Slaba's name for the award. The other committee members included Marcia Podzimek, Antoinette Bartunek, Bernadette Koupal and Ilene Jansen.

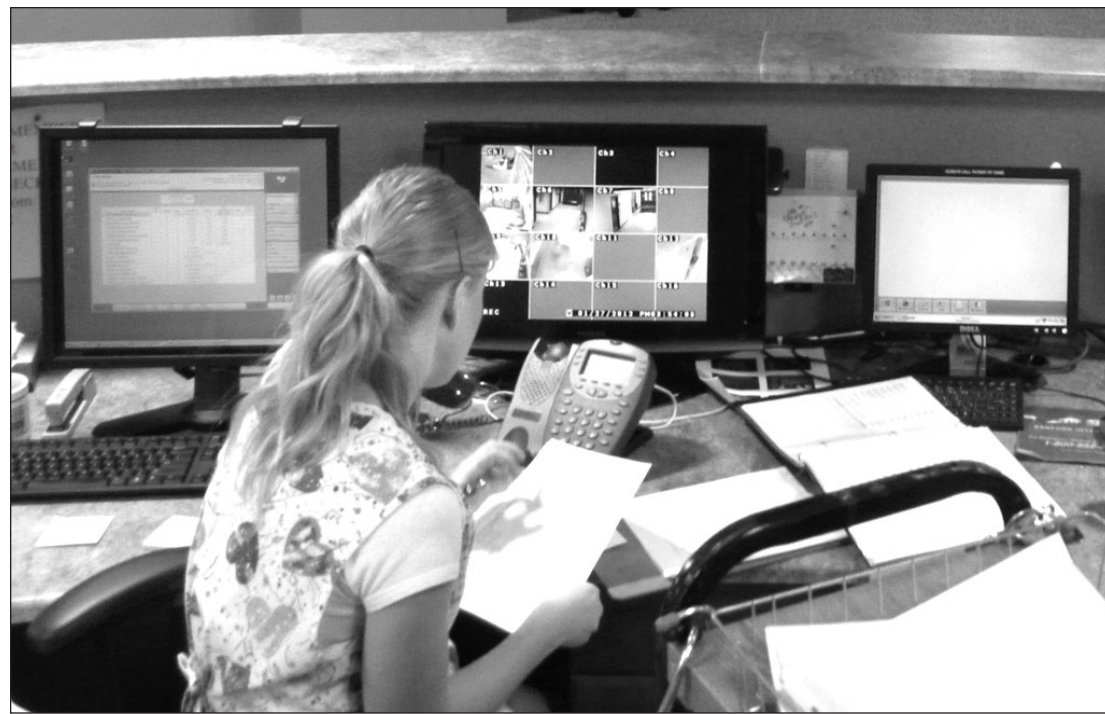
"When you look at his credentials, I'm surprised that Bryan didn't win the award," Resuello said. "We did this (application) last year, but we were running out of time and it was more like a rushed nomination. This year, there was a lot more time to work on it. All of us on the administration team were on board with it. (The award) was something that we really thought he deserved."

Slaba can be nominated again for the award, and the WCMH-A committee is already planning on it, Resuello said.

WCMH-A has become one of the most technologically advanced rural hospitals in its region, Resuello said. The capital campaign raised \$890,000, allowing the facility to build rehabilitation and urgent care clinics as well as patient wings.

The project doubled the hospital's size to 47,000 square feet, and renovation expanded space for lab work. WCMH-A also became one of the first six hospitals in South Dakota to offer full digital imaging services.

The "Grow Your Own" Project draws and retains local talent as a long-term solution to recruitment problems. In addition, the hospital has expanded its outreach services, bringing specialists to Wagner so residents don't need to drive hours for such care. And the various "e-care" services — which transmit images or send information about a patient — allow local health care



COURTESY PHOTO

The nurses' station enjoys greater work space and more visibility of hallways at Wagner Community Memorial Hospital-Avera (WCMH-A) thanks to construction and renovation projects. WCMH-A administrator Bryan Slaba was a national finalist for the Shirley Ann Munroe Leadership Award for the projects and other major changes during his four-year tenure.

providers to consult with specialists in regional health centers.

Slaba points to the hospital's growing use of electronic medical records as helpful for patients but also meeting a federal mandate.

"If we didn't raise the level of using electronic medical records, the federal government would start taking reimbursement away from us by 2014," he said, noting the major conversion from paper charts to electronics.

Slaba said he emphasizes the "patient first" approach and has sought new partnerships, including the Southern Charles Mix County Healthcare Collaborative. The consortium includes the county health nurse, Indian Health Services, VA Clinic, Wagner Good Samaritan Center, Lake Andes rural Health Clinic, South Dakota Department of Social

Services, South Dakota Department of Health and the Yankton Sioux Tribe Health Board.

The consortium received an \$85,000 networking grant, and an assessment of area needs has been submitted in hopes of obtaining a three-year grant to address regional health care issues, Slaba said.

Those issues include poverty in the hospital's service area, roughly a 20-mile radius, he said.

"This hospital is run high on Medicaid because of low incomes, mainly children. Whereas most smaller local hospitals run between 1 and 3 percent Medicaid, we are running at a 20 percent rate of Medicaid patients," he said.

"The Medicaid system is woefully underfunded and creates a tremendous financial impact on the rest of our patients. We are having

to absorb (Medicaid) costs and cost shift to areas where there is a little bit more margin."

Slaba acknowledges that the hospital is a business, and he relies on his staff to provide him with ideas for making the hospital more efficient. Building projects have allowed the hospital to upgrade its services, but they aren't a replacement for personal care, he said.

"Brick and mortar is a great tool, but it doesn't deliver the care that our staff does," he said. "I learned from them, from the ground up, from Day One when I walked into the hospital. There is a lot of trust between us. I have built that trust with them over the last four years. They know I'm not just here (and will move on)."

The WCMH-A staff gave Slaba very high marks in a survey that

Student Group Wants USD Campus Smoke-Free

VERMILLION (AP) — A student-driven resolution aims to make the University of South Dakota campus smoke-free.

The Student Government Association passed the resolution late last year, and it now is in the hands of the University Executive Committee.

Smoking is not allowed within 25 feet of a building entrance on the Vermillion campus, but Student Government Association President Collin Michels tells KELO-TV that the policy has proven difficult to enforce. He hopes a campus smoking ban can be put in place by the fall semester.

was part of the application for the Munroe national award. The five-question section asked staff about the administrator's leadership and direction. He received one mark in the 86th percentile, one mark in the 97th percentile and three marks in the 99th percentile.

Slaba's respect for the staff is mutual, as seen in the survey ratings, Resuello said.

"This was Bryan's first job in health care, and he was forthright with us. He said, 'I will be needing you to guide me in how to manage the hospital,'" she said. "He was very empowering toward us. He was very accommodating (to our requests), and he understood why we needed the changes. The other thing that really set him apart, he met with our administrative team every week. We were his 'think tank' and gave him ideas."

Resuello jokingly calls Slaba a "propeller of change" wherever he goes.

"I have never seen leadership like it before," she said. "He is never afraid to question the status quo and is willing to go where others haven't gone."

Slaba also cares about the Wagner community, even though he lives in Mitchell, Resuello said. She pointed to his active role as Rotary president, Chamber of Commerce member and a leading force behind the renovation of an elderly low-income housing project in Wagner.

Slaba said such local connections are crucial in serving area residents.

"I believe you have got to be involved so you know the needs, wants and wishes of the area residents," he said. "Then, you can address their concerns and deliver the health care they are looking for. If you're not part of that community, there is a disconnect."

Slaba wants to show that passion wherever he goes in Wagner and the surrounding area. The Munroe Award recognition focuses on the needs of rural communities and their health care, he said.

"I am a results-driven individual. I say, 'People, we can do this. We will get it done,'" he said. "We didn't run and hide from any of these concerns. We tackled them head-on and fixed them. And this award addresses all the great things that we're doing."

Resuello agreed, calling the recognition "a morale booster" for Wagner and recognizing Slaba for his hard work, which sees him in his office anywhere from 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"I said to him, 'Bryan, your talent is so great. You can go anywhere, yet you choose to stay in Wagner. We are happy you are here,'" she said. "We are very blessed. He's one of a kind, he really is. You can't help but respect him."

OBITUARIES

Leland 'Chris' Swensen

WAKONDA — Leland Leroy "Chris" Swensen, 72, died Friday, January 27, 2012 at the Wakonda Heritage Manor after battling cancer.



Swensen

Leland "Chris" was born April 12, 1939, in Hurley to Chris and Alice Swensen.

He graduated from Wakonda High School in 1957. After graduation, Leland joined the US Navy. He married Marilyn Jensen of Wakonda on June 14, 1961. They had two children, Keith and Laurie.

While serving aboard the USS *Canberra*, stationed off the coast of Vietnam, his ship and crew fired over 25,000 rounds of naval gunfire in support of the first full scale landing in the Mekong Delta and US forces in the I, II, and IV Corps areas. In March of 1967, during OPERATION SEA DRAGON, his ship came under intense enemy fire and was hit by enemy shore batteries four times on two separate occasions. A combat veteran, Leland retired after a 20 year career in the Navy, having served at duty stations including Newport RI, Japan, San Diego, Hong Kong, Great Lakes IL, and Virginia Beach VA.

After retiring from the Navy in 1976, Leland and family returned to SD. He was employed by the town of Wakonda until 1987 when he went to work for the University of South Dakota in the Facilities Management Department. He was a member of the United Methodist Church of Wakonda, the VFW in Yankton, and the American Legion in Wakonda. Chris was also a volunteer with the VA Hospital in Sioux Falls.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Marilyn; his parents and his sister, Lynetta.

Survivors include his son, Keith of Colorado Springs, CO; daughter, Laurie of Grand Forks, ND; granddaughter, Christina and grandson, David.

Memorial services will begin at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, February 4, 2012 in the United Methodist Church in Wakonda with burial to follow in the Union Cemetery rural Wakonda.

For obituary and online condolences, visit hansenfuneralhome.com.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
January 31, 2012

Joanne Putz

LA CROSSE, Wis — Joanne K. Putz, 77 of La Crosse, Wis., passed away at her home on Sunday, January 29, 2012. She was born in rural Dubuque County, Iowa on February 23, 1934 to Reynold and Calista (Keane) Offerman. She married Jim Putz on September 7, 1957 in Dyersville, Iowa.



Putz

Joanne was a devoted wife and mother who cherished her family, children and grandchildren. In recent years she and Jim were able to travel internationally and particularly enjoyed her trips to Ireland.

In addition to her husband Jim of La Crosse, she is survived by her five children; Kathy Putz of Sydney, Australia, Mary Jo (Scott) Schafer of Edmonds, WA., Tom (Amy) Putz of Scottsdale, AZ., Alice (Joe) Oberbroeckling of Sheboygan, WI., Sally (Sam) Duray of Mount Prospect, IL., and ten grandchildren. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by two brothers, Robert and Charles.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 2, 2012 at the Roncalli Newman Center of La Crosse. Rev. Alan Wierzbowski will officiate. Private family burial will take place at a later date. Friends may call on the family at the church Thursday evening from 5:00 p.m. until the time of Mass. In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred and will be donated to the "Room To Read" program in Sydney Australia where her daughter Kathy volunteers.

The Schumacher-Kish Funeral Home of La Crosse is in charge of arrangements. The family's online guestbook may be signed at www.schumacher-kish.com.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
January 31, 2012

Kermit Heckenlaible

Kermit Heckenlaible, 86, died Saturday, January 28 at the Yankton Care Center.

Kermit was born September 29, 1925 to Samuel and Hertha (Schmidt) Heckenlaible.

He is survived by daughter Bonita Heckenlaible, Sioux Falls, son Stuart Heckenlaible and grandson Taylor Heckenlaible of Freeman, and sister Verna Herrboldt.

He was preceded in death by his parents, daughter-in-law Betty Heckenlaible, brother-in-law Filmore Herrboldt and nephew Den-

Carol Mayer

Carol Mayer, age 72, of Yankton, SD died Friday, January 27, 2012 at Avera McKennan Hospital, Sioux Falls, SD.

Mass of Christian Burial will be 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, February 1, 2012, at St. Benedict Catholic Church, with Fr. Ken Luff officiating. Burial will be in Sacred Heart Cemetery, Yankton, SD.

Visitations will begin at 5 p.m. Tuesday, January 31, 2012, at the Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory, Yankton, SD, with a rosary at 7 p.m. followed by a memorial video tribute and a Scripture service at 7:30 p.m. Visitations will resume one hour prior to the service at the church.



Mayer

Pallbearers will be Leon Abler, Roger and Dustin Larsen, Craig Little, Clair Sudbeck, and Mark Rausch. Honorary pallbearers will be her grandchildren:

Nick, Shana, Amanda, Kelsey and Zach Mayer, Alicia Thunker, Kristen Cucullu, and Colton and Brooklyn Bender.

Carol was born January 23, 1940 in Jamestown, ND to Harold and Ruby (Burlson) Walters. She graduated from Jamestown High School. She married Ted Mayer Jr. on September 5, 1959 in Jamestown. In September 1970 the family

moved to Yankton, SD where Carol worked for Flora Craft, Missouri Valley Shopper and Mayer OK Hardware. Ted and Carol moved to Sioux Falls, SD and Omaha, NE before moving home to Yankton in January 2000. At the time of her death, Carol worked as a secretary for American Pain Relief Clinic. Carol was a member of St. Benedict Catholic Church. She enjoyed walking and spending time with her nine grandchildren. She also has two great granddaughters and a great grandchild on the way.

She is survived by two sons, Steven (Sue) Mayer of Palmer, AK and Timothy (Beth) Mayer of Jefferson City, MO, and daughter, Rhonda (Bradley) Bender of Yankton, SD; her nine grandchil-

dren and two great-grandchildren; two brothers Eugene (Eldora) Walters of Bismarck, ND and Roger (Jackie) Walters of Jamestown, ND and brother-in-law Ron (Ann) Knobel of Waco, TX.

She was preceded in death by her parents, two sisters, Jeanette Knobel and Dilone Tahrn, one brother, Eldon Walters, and her beloved husband of 47 years, Ted Mayer Jr.

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FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY, INC.
Online condolences at:
www.opsahl-kostelfuneralhome.com

nis Herrboldt.

Funeral services are Wednesday February 1, 2012 at Bethany Mennonite Church at Freeman, South Dakota at 1:30 p.m., with visitation at Walter Funeral Home Tuesday beginning at 5 with the family present from 6-7.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the Bethany food pantry.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
January 31, 2012

Howard Hammitt

ELK POINT — Howard Rayford "Curly" Hammitt, 86, of Elk Point, SD, died suddenly on Friday, January 27, 2012.

Funeral services will be held at 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 1, 2012, at United Parish in Elk Point with Pastor David Bambas officiating. Burial will be in the Elk Point Cemetery following the ceremony. Military honors conducted by V.F.W. Post 915 and American Legion Post 134.

Visitation will be from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2012, at United Parish in



Hammitt

Marilyn Behl

SCOTLAND — Funeral services for Marilyn Ruby Behl, 86, of Scotland, will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, February 3, at United Methodist Church in Scotland with Pastor Tom Petersen officiating. Interment will follow in Rosehill Cemetery, Scotland.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, February 2, from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at the Goglin Funeral Home in Scotland. Following the visitation at 7:00 p.m., there will be a prayer service in the funeral home.

Elk Point with a prayer service 7:00 p.m.

Curly is survived by his children, Mark Hammitt of Yankton, SD, Laura (Ron) Baker of Sioux Falls, SD, Jane (Steve) Allard of Elk Point, SD, Kurt (Ann) Hammitt of Elk Point, SD, and Paul (Louise) Hammitt of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; his grandchildren, Heidi (Lance) Edwards, Carly Baker, Mikale Baker, Ben Baker, Marni (Rob) Law, Alissa Allard, Blake (Leslie) Allard, Nick (Erin) Hammitt, Matt (Erika) Hammitt, Molly Hammitt, Derek Hammitt, and Paula (Ben) Sass; 14 great-grandchildren; and his brother, Douglas

Marilyn passed away on Monday, January 30, 2012 in Scotland, South Dakota.

Online condolences may be sent at www.goglinfh.com.

Goglin Funeral Home
Tyndall - Scotland - Tripp



www.goglinfh.com

(Marene) Hammitt. Services are entrusted to Kober Funeral Home in Elk Point, SD.

Condolences may be posted online to www.koberfuneralhome.com.

Yankton Press & Dakotan
January 31, 2012

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