

Medicare demo bill clears Senate

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG
DAILY PRESS SENIOR WRITER

A bill that would extend a Medicare demonstration program in place at Delta Memorial and other small hospitals has cleared the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, co-sponsor Michael Bennet, D-Colo. announced.

The Rural Community Hospital Demonstration Extension Act was introduced in February to continue an earlier demonstration program that was created to aid

rural hospitals in the nation's 10 least-populated states. The program was first renewed in 2010, at which time it was expanded to include 20 of the least populated states.

Qualifying hospitals have fewer than 51 in-patient beds, offer 24-hour emergency care, and aren't eligible for designation as a Community Access Hospital.

Delta County Memorial Hospital qualified in 2013 for the program, which reimburses the facility on reasonable

costs for covered Medicare services, while testing the feasibility of doing so.

Participation has meant between \$900,000 and \$1 million per year for the hospital, CEO Jason Cleckler said in March.

The number of patients on Medicare has increased in rural areas since the Affordable Care Act went into effect. Medicare is among the lowest-paying insurances, while reimbursements are being cut and, at the same time, hospitals have had to convert to

electronic record-keeping and implement quality measurements for reimbursements or face penalties.

It's hard for Delta to absorb some of the losses while staying up to date; the rural community hospital demo program helps the hospital stay viable.

"Colorado's rural communities, like Delta County, Steamboat Springs and Sterling, face unique challenges to ensuring access to critical care health services,"

Bennet said in a news release June 24.

"This bill extends a lifeline to help rural hospitals continue to offer 24-hour emergency and in-patient care."

The 2015 extension act is also sponsored by Sens. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa; Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska and Jerry Moran, R-Kansas.

Reach Katharhyn Heidelberg at 252-7032 or katharhynnh@montrosepress.com.

CMU student takes on Capitol

By KATIE LANGFORD
DAILY PRESS STAFF WRITER

Wonder Wachara may have just finished her freshman year of college, but she's already rubbed elbows with senators, congressmen and a Supreme Court justice — and she doesn't plan on stopping there.



Wonder Wachara, a freshman at Colorado Mesa University's Montrose campus, was one of 100 students from across the state who attended the Colorado Capital Conference in Washington, D.C. (Courtesy Photo)

Wachara attended the Colorado Capital Conference in Washington, D.C., in June, one of 100 students from across the state who applied and were selected to attend the event. Wachara is a political-science major and currently takes classes at the Montrose campus of Colorado Mesa University.

"It has enabled me to learn in a way that I never really learned before, and that's what I liked best about it," she said. "Listening to the news and watching TV, it appears as though legislators are a lot more concerned about their political agenda rather than taking care of citizens, but when I was in D.C., that's not what I felt at all. Other senators were actually commending Colorado on electing Senators Bennet and Gardner, because they are one of the best teams ... in Washington. They work together far more frequently and better than other (senators) do.

"It was amazing to be so proud of your state for exuding that kind of cooperation in Washington, when all it seems like you see is separation."

Wachara moved to the United States from Kenya when she was 10 years old because her parents wanted her and her siblings to receive the best education possible. She moved to Montrose from Kentucky to attend CMU. Wachara said her education always has been her top priority, which led her to apply to attend the conference.

"It made me more optimistic as a political-science student, because

running for office is something I may consider doing in the future, and everything that's been happening in Washington lately has been really discouraging," she said.

"It was refreshing to see that being a senator didn't have to be what it seemed like on the news. It didn't have to be divisive and centered on the politics instead of the people."

Derek Wagner, vice president for

intergovernmental and community affairs at CMU, said the conference gives students a unique opportunity to interact with politicians and government officials.

"We've been doing the Capital Conference for the last five years, and every year we take four to eight students who have unprecedented access to pundits, speakers and members of the president's cabinet," Wagner said. "It was good that we had Wonder representing the Montrose campus. She brought a different perspective, and it was great that she applied. We got a lot out of having her there, because just like all of our students, she has a different experience and a different story."

Wachara said her biggest takeaway was that ideals are still alive in the political system.

"I think one of the hardest things for anyone who has ideals (is) to go into the world and have them shattered. It was nice to see that the ideals of a government of the people, for the people and by the people was still present in the lives of my senator," she said.

To find out more information about the Capital Conference, visit www.coloradomesa.edu/capitalconference.

Katie Langford can be reached at 252-7028 or at katiel@montrosepress.com.

Family Law Day offers free legal advice

Residents of Colorado's 7th Judicial District (Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel counties) who are representing themselves in family law court proceedings will soon have an opportunity to obtain free legal advice, mediation and parenting education.

The 7th Judicial District and 7th Judicial District Access to Justice Committee will offer a Family Law Day at the Delta County Combined Courts on July 31, providing services free to self-represented parties involved in domestic relations cases.

Participants who wish to attend parenting classes, obtain legal advice, or seek mediation service must register before July 31 by e-mailing 7jdfld@gmail.com or by calling Ashley Burgemeister at 642-8330.

Parenting-education workshops will be provided from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in English and Spanish.

From 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., participants may obtain services including legal advice from attorneys, mediation to help with parenting plans and separation agreements, and assistance completing and reviewing court forms.

Spanish interpreters will be available. Community agencies including Child Support Services, Hilltop, CASA and Empowering Dads will have representatives at the event to provide information about out-of-court services related to domestic-relations cases.

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Contact Michelle at (970) 252-7021 or csr1@montrosepress.com for more details. Deadline for celebrations is noon on Thursdays.

FIREWORKS

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— distinguish themselves with trademark aerial displays.

"Dic is one of those who uses the same color scheme in a broad sense," Snyder said. "For example, he may package four displays of red, white and blue at the same time to make the effect even larger, so it fills the sky. Another time, he may use the willow-effect or weave the fuses together so there may be as many as 10 going off (in succession)."

Snyder explained the willow effect as the long-burning, streaming residuals that fall almost to the point of reaching the ground.

In preparation for the aerial display, the Montrose Fire Department is not taking any chances on Divis' pyrotechnics, of which ground zero will be from atop Sunset Mesa.

"We'll probably be out there about 3 p.m. (on the Fourth) spraying down the grounds and hillside," said Montrose Fire Chief Tad Rowan.

When interviewed Tuesday about his department's safety plans for the Fourth, Rowan said he and his officers still were developing an incident action plan for the park grounds, and he anticipated having as many as a dozen firefighters and safety personnel on location during the festivities.

"We'll have crews and an ambulance on top (of Sunset Mesa) and another down in the park," Rowan said.

Rowan said the pyrotechnical area will be cordoned off early Saturday, and he advised people to both keep a safe distance and to refrain from

"We'll probably be out there about 3 p.m. (on the Fourth) spraying down the grounds and hillside."

Tad Rowan,
Montrose fire chief

picking up fireworks debris that could contain hot embers.

The fireworks will be the culmination of Independence Day celebrations in Montrose that begin early.

Starting at 10 a.m. Saturday, a parade will commemorate the nation's 239 birthday. The parade will go from Pythian Street to Rio Grande.

After the parade — from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. — the resurrected Main in Motion will be in full motion. There will be music, food, shops and a chance to mingle with family and friends.

Also beginning at 11 a.m. at Cerise Park, American Legion Post 73 is conducting a barbecue. The goodies will be coming off the grill through the noon hour until 1 p.m.

Fireworks will get under way after dusk, probably about 9:15 p.m., Snyder said.

"The people of Montrose, I think, will be very happy with the display," she said.

Alan Lewis Gerstenecker is news editor of the Daily Press. He can be contacted by calling 252-7039 or via email at alang@montrosepress.com.

COURT

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dissolving her department soon after the former county manager had agreed to let her work part-time during her pregnancy.

Barnett's 2014 suit contends the resulting stress contributed to her miscarriage a few days after being terminated in 2013. She is seeking lost wages, punitive damages and compensation for pain and suffering.

Montrose County's response says that Barnett was let go because her department had been eliminated due to budget constraints and no comparable position was available.

Reach Katharhyn Heidelberg at 252-7032 or katharhynnh@montrosepress.com.

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Correction

The business address for Macsumize, an Apple warranty service, was listed incorrectly in Wednesday's edition. The correct address is 330 S. 12th St. The Daily Press regrets the error.

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