



GREGORY TIMES-ADVOCATE

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Management changes underway at Silver Threads Assisted Living

Donna Steppat, long-time administrator at Silver Threads, announced on Friday, November 5, 2021, that management changes are underway at Silver Threads.

Jim and Dulce Frank, formerly of Burke, SD, will be assuming management of the facility upon returning to the area. Jim and Dulce are experienced healthcare professionals, Jim as a Hospital Administrator, and Dulce as a Registered Nurse with experience in several different clinical settings. Dulce has already been working at Silver Threads in a part-time capacity since March, when the facility was experiencing staffing shortages and difficulties due to COVID.

The Franks plan to work alongside Steppat for several months throughout the management transition, learning the day-to-day operations.

"We are excited to be moving back to the area and hope to bring some value to Silver Threads with our many years of healthcare experience," stated Jim Frank. "We want to thank Donna for her commitment to our residents and steady leadership at Silver Threads. We also want to thank our dedicated staff who have been working extremely hard under dif-



Jim and Dulce Frank, left, will take over the management at Silver Threads the first of the year. They will work alongside Donna Steppat, right, manager for the past 13 years, during the transition.

ficult circumstances the past 18 months through the COVID pandemic."

Steppat added that she has en-

joyed working the last thirteen years at Silver Threads and is looking forward to the Franks being on board the beginning of 2022.



Juracek completed the 125th Boston Marathon on October 11, running for Team Tedy, to raise money for the American Stroke Association.



Juracek is shown above with Ted Bruschi of team Tedy. Bruschi suffered a stroke in February 2005 at the age of 31, just weeks after winning his third Super Bowl with the New England Patriots and days after returning from playing in the Pro Bowl in Hawaii. Since then, he and his wife have dedicated themselves to raising awareness of strokes, being advocates, and inspiring stroke survivors.



Juracek ran in the Med City Marathon 2021, the marathon's 25th anniversary re-do in Rochester, MN, on September 12, 2021, because he wanted to visit the city once without having surgery. He is shown above with two of his surgeons who cheered him on and greeted him at the finish line. The surgeon shown on the right did the most important of his surgeries, and has even operated on the Queen of England. His son, pictured on the left, performed Juracek's last two surgeries and is now Chief of Colo-rectal surgery at Mayo.

Gregory PD adds virtual crisis care to better serve the community

by Patty Connealy

Chief Justice David Gilbertson did much to improve South Dakota's legal system during his 19 years as head of the state's supreme court. Although he is now retired, one of his visions is becoming a reality, ensuring that those working in the criminal justice system have access to the resources they need to help people with mental illness, regardless of where they live.

About a year ago, Avera Health developed a pilot program to support rural areas which are underserved for mental health, and to provide help with the decision-making process for individuals in crisis. They developed a partnership with the Unified Judicial System in collaboration with the South Dakota Sheriffs' Association and community mental health centers with pilot funding from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust. Governor Noem also asked for and received funding for the program from the state.

The program was designed to enable law enforcement officers to connect individuals in a crisis situation directly with a qualified mental health professional without an automatic trip to a hospital. On November 1, 2021, Avera eCare became Avel eCare as part of an acquisition of Avera Health's telemedicine services by Aquiline Capital Partners.

Gregory Police Chief Doug Catts attended a conference for police chiefs and sheriffs where he learned about the virtual crisis care pilot program. When he returned to Gregory, he told the sheriff's department about the program and asked if they would be willing to get on board with him to provide this service throughout the county.

Mobile crisis teams, in which law enforcement is assisted by behavioral health professionals, have been effective in helping de-escalate crisis situations in many urban areas across the country, but South Dakota has only two -- in Minnehaha and Hughes counties.

With an estimated ten percent of all law enforcement calls involving a person who may be experiencing a mental health crisis, a virtual crisis care program can have a significant positive impact on preventing unnecessary admissions to emergency rooms and mental health hospitals.

The process is simple. The law enforcement officer initiates a call to the crisis response team at Avel eCare to request a safety assessment; Avel eCare has qualified mental health professionals on staff available 24/7 to respond to calls. The officer will hand the individual in crisis a tablet, and the response team will initiate a video session. The crisis response team will complete a safety assessment and follow up with law enforcement by phone or continued video session to discuss recommendations and follow up with Southern Plains Mental Health Services.



Police Chief Doug Catts shows the iPad that his department will use in crisis situations to connect individuals with qualified mental health professionals.

The pilot program has had great success so far; of the individuals seen, eight of every ten are able to stay at home.

This program is a benefit not only to the person in crisis, but also to law enforcement, local and state government, hospitals, and the public. A person in crisis has immediate access to a qualified mental health professional in a familiar setting. Local hospitals avoid unnecessary time spent evaluating patients who will now be able to remain at home. Counties avoid costs associated with mental illness holds. Law enforcement will save time spent waiting at a hospital, and time and money associated with transporting the individual to a mental health facility unnecessarily. The state saves money from unnecessary stays at the Human Services Center. Also, the person in crisis will not see a bill; the costs for this service are covered with the funds appropriated from the state.

Chief Catts said that before the virtual crisis care program became available, he would spend about

four hours taking an individual in crisis to the hospital and waiting around for medical personnel to decide whether to send the person home or on to a mental health services facility. He predicts that eCare will cut that time down to about 45 minutes.

"I look at these situations on a scale of 1-10," Chief Catts explained. "We usually don't get involved until the situation is at a five or higher. We don't know what happened at points one through five that led to the crisis."

He said that in the police world, officers are sometimes called to be social workers, but that isn't their training. This program will help fill that gap. "Sometimes people need professional help," he said, "and sometimes they just need someone to talk to."

Brian Erickson of Avel eCare said, "We are honored to be able to work in the communities that have implemented this program."

He added, "Where you live shouldn't determine the quality of care available."

New DOE/P&Z administrator meets the Gregory County Commissioners

by Patty Connealy

The Gregory County Board of Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, November 2, 2021, at the Gregory County Courthouse for a regular meeting.

The neighbors are quiet

Acting as a board of adjustment, they approved a conditional use application from James and Robin Baker to build a seven-unit commercial storage building in an ag district in the SE ¼ less cemetery in Section 30-95-67, Star Valley Township, as per the Planning and Zoning Board's recommendation. The variance follows all zoning requirements.

New DOE meets the board

The new Director of Equalization/Planning and Zoning Administrator, Tammy Jean Martin, introduced herself to the board. She officially started the day after the meeting.

There really isn't an alternative

The board authorized the chair to

sign an easement for Darrell Hay, Jr. to bore a water line under a road in Union Township and another easement for Dan Baxa to also bore a water line under a road in the SE ¼ of Section 31 of St. Charles Township.

Dump passes inspection

A report issued by the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources-Waste Management Program found that the Gregory County Landfill is operating in an acceptable manner in accordance with Permit 19-42.

What if they don't sign it?

Toby Qualm from the South Dakota Department of Legislative Audit (DLA) discussed preliminary work underway on Gregory County's 2019-2020 audit. The board chair was authorized to sign the engagement letter with DLA as required for the audit.

City of Gregory has updated agreement with Sheriff's Dept.

The board approved an updated

agreement between the City of Gregory and the Gregory County Sheriff's Department for part-time on-call law enforcement services.

Commissioners and officials get green light to travel

The travel request for county commissioners and officials to attend the Randall Reservoir Association meeting in Lyman County on November 8, 2021, was approved.

Scott Drews to get his due

An error was discovered when 2021 wages were calculated, and Scott Drews was shorted 20 cents per hour. The commissioners corrected his pay from \$15.81 per hour to \$16.01, retroactive to January 1, 2021.

The next regular meeting of the commissioners will be held at 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at the Gregory County Courthouse.