

Letters To The Editor

Not Clear What Makes An Emergency At FCMC

To The Editor:

I have always considered myself to have a firm grasp on the English language and up until this weekend, I thought I could define the word "emergency."

On Saturday, my 2-year-old son woke from an afternoon nap struggling for breath and had to be rushed to Fulton County Medical Center. Upon arrival, I rushed through the door of the ER with my son in my arms and anxiously approached the front desk. With great concern I explained that my baby was having a difficult time breathing and I wanted him seen immediately. At that time I was told "have a seat and someone will be with you shortly." That was a precursor to the nonchalant treatment that would ensue during the rest of our four-hour stay at the facility.

For several hours, my son coughed violently and gasped for breath and even began choking and turning colors at one point. My child got virtually no assistance during this horrible experience and no one seemed interested in helping.

After what seemed like an eternity, the ER doctor was "kind" enough to advise that he could not seem to figure out what was wrong with my son and that we could probably go home if we lived close. According to this so-called medical professional, my son's X-ray was clear.

After our insistence, the physician conceded to consult with our pediatrician. At that point we were arranged for transit to Chambersburg Hospital, and the ER doctor stated that he thought we could just go ahead and drive on over since our son was not critical, in his assessment. However, we insisted on an ambulance, because we were so concerned for our son and feared that the worst may happen if we attempted to make the trip on our own.

As we waited for the arrival of the EMS crew, the baby began to choke once again and my husband rushed him out to the nurse's desk for assistance. The doctor smugly replied from the desk that he did not believe the child was choking, he was fine. When my family expressed their disgust with the way that this doctor was treating our son, his

response was that they would need to go to the waiting room or risk having criminal charges pressed against them. Criminal charges for demanding medical attention ... unbelievable!

I fully understand that the emergency room sees a lot of patients with various degrees of medical distress. There are many folks who have no choice but to use the emergency room for routine care as well. But, what is an emergency? To me, a baby that can't breathe is clearly an extreme emergency, but the ER doctor on call on Saturday evening at the FCMC must operate with a different impression of what an emergency situation is. This was not a child with a hangnail, runny nose or a toothache. It was truly a near-death situation that deserved to be treated as such. This doctor was interested in talking with the staff about what he was having for dinner, what his plans were for the next day, but nothing about taking care of my son. This is completely unacceptable and unforgivable.

For those readers who are wondering what did happen to my son, he was rushed by ambulance to Chambersburg Hospital where he spent several days in the pediatric care unit being treated for double pneumonia. He is now recovering at home and doing well.

The communities of Fulton County need to know that this is how your Medical Center treats patients. During the past several years, the community has been solicited by Fulton County Medical Center for contributions toward the establishment of a new facility and one that was promised to better serve the needs of Fulton County. I am sure that I speak for most citizens when I say that I have no problem contributing to such an effort when I know that I can rely on the facility for the needs of my family.

I have to wonder if the Medical Center's billing office will respond in the same manner as the doctor. Something tells me they will view our bill for the visit and the subsequent payment as an "emergency" that requires immediate attention.

Krista (Fletcher) Streletz
McConnellsburg

ER Care At FCMC Not What It Should Be

To The Editor:

I am writing this to make the people of Fulton County aware of what has happened to the level of healthcare in our very own Fulton County Medical Center emergency room. This is out of love and concern for our 2-year-old grandson, little Dylan Streltz, who had a very bad and life-threatening experience on Saturday, December 6.

Dylan was taken to Fulton County Medical Center emergency room by our daughter, running in with him in her arms and begging for someone to help him because he couldn't breathe. His mother, Krista, was told to just have a seat and someone would be with him shortly. She said that he needs help now and he can't wait. No one was showing any concern and weren't in a hurry to help this little boy who couldn't breathe. Finally, Dylan was taken into a room and a nurse did an evaluation on him.

My husband and I had been called by our daughter to come to the hospital and be with them; we were in Chambersburg at the time. I kept calling to check on Dylan. As we came into town, Krista called again and said he was being transferred to Chambersburg, but they could take him over in their car. I said "absolutely not, you get an ambulance."

When we walked into that ER and saw how little Dylan was struggling for each breath, I could not believe that there wasn't a nurse or doctor with him. We asked one of the nurses (a family friend) to get an ambulance because he was in no shape to be taken there by her and she agreed and took care of it for us. Dylan still struggled for each breath while vomiting and choking on it and still no one came to help him.

It's a sad thing to see a little boy that sick and no one doing anything to help him. When my husband spoke out about how long it was taking and we were questioning where the ambulance was, he was threatened that he would be prosecuted. When I spoke up in his defense, I was told the same. We were trying to get our grandson help before something worse happened to him. Thank God for the ambulance crew and for the doctors and staff at Chambersburg Hospital, for without them and God's help, I truly don't think he would still be with us today.

What has happened to giving your all to helping people and for compassion for an adorable 2-year-old little boy? I am also very grateful for the few wisest family doctors who we still have left in Fulton County. I have heard of three other incidents involving this same ER doctor. We just hope that no one else has to go through what Dylan did.

And by the way, he wasn't fine and his X-ray wasn't clear. He had double pneumonia and couldn't get a full breath until 5:00 a.m. Sunday morning.

Debbie Fletcher
Harrisonville

FCMC

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dowment. This foundation's main purpose is to support the improvement of the health and wellness of Fulton County and the surrounding areas."

The FCMC Foundation is close to kicking off a fundraising campaign for the planned patient services/administration building to be attached to the current new facility. Ground-breaking is projected for the spring of 2009 for occupancy in the spring of 2010.

Also, during the meeting, the Fulton County Conservation District showed a display and spoke about the environmental footprint of the new facility.

Board Chairman Lynn Palmer announced the new board members for three-year terms, including Tim McGarvey, Larry Palmer, Nancy Younker, Tammy Bard and Denny Buterbaugh. He also acknowledged two retiring board members, Wendy Melius and Brent Layton. Layton's term will be fulfilled by Tonya House through 2009. Layton retired earlier this year.

Tim Hann and Vince Joyce were elected to serve as community members on the center's nominating committee. They will provide community input on the selection of new FCMC board members.

Board officers for the year include Lynn Palmer, president; William Dovey Jr., vice-president; Larry Palmer, treasurer; and Nancy Younker, secretary.

Monday evening's annual meeting was held in the Koontz Family Main Lobby at Fulton County Medical Center.

Needmore Fire Co. Receives \$117,515 FEMA Assistance Grant

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has awarded an \$117,515 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) to the Needmore Volunteer Fire Co. Inc. to assist in the purchase of an array of personal protective equipment, including 10 45-minute SCBA units, ten spare cylinders, 10 voice-amplified face pieces, one complete air fill system, two SCBA cylinder storage units, and 10 full sets of personal protective gear, which includes coats, pants, suspenders, helmets, boots, gloves, and protective hoods.

Nationally, the AFG awards, which will be distributed in phases, will ultimately provide approximately \$560 million to fire departments and nonaffil-

iated emergency medical serving organizations throughout the country.

AFG awards aim to enhance response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of the public with respect to fire and other hazards. The grants enable local fire departments and emergency medical services organizations to purchase or receive training, conduct first-responder health and safety programs, and buy equipment and response vehicles.

"The Assistance to Firefighters Grants program has been instrumental in building capacity and providing needed resources for our nation's firefighters," said FEMA Administrator R. David Paulison. "From the purchase of equip-

ment to first-responder training, the AFG program has helped improve response capabilities and saved lives and property in communities throughout the United States."

Since 2002, AFG has provided more than \$3.6 billion in grants to fire departments and first-responder organizations to purchase response equipment, personal protective equipment, vehicles and fire prevention activities. AFG is administered cooperatively by two FEMA components: the Grants Program Directorate and the United States Fire Administration.

The full list of FY 2008 AFG recipients and other information is posted on the AFG Web site www.firegrantsupport.com

Medicare Part D Open For Enrollment

Enrollment ends December 31

STAFF REPORT

Area senior citizens wanting to enroll in Medicare Part D or change their current provider still have until the conclusion of December, according to the executive director of the tri-county based Area Agency on Aging.

Alan Smith, who heads the Area Agency on Aging in Fulton County as well as neighboring Huntingdon and Bedford counties, informed the "News" that agency officials have been work-

ing diligently to inform Medicare beneficiaries of the ins-and-outs of the enrollment process.

The most prominent concern for many older persons, Smith said, is the coverage gap also commonly referred to as the "doughnut hole." "The response has been a call for advocacy on shrinking the size of the doughnut hole, and we will continue the advocacy," added Smith.

"It is important to note that as of the end of October there were 2,850 Medicare beneficiaries in Fulton County, which include individuals under the age of 65 who are receiving Social Security

disability, with 2,353 having Part D coverage," Smith stated.

The end result at this time is 500 older and disabled individuals who are not enrolled in a plan based on a variety of possible reasons ranging from price, not taking medications, confusion surrounding the various options and not knowing how to enroll.

Any area resident needing additional information regarding the Medicare Part D enrollment or wanting assistance with enrollment is urged to contact the McConnellsburg office of the Area Agency on Aging by calling 717-485-5151.

Boro, Police

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have the same rights and responsibilities as the current officers. Council then abandoned the idea.

Feeling the pinch of the current economy and being committed to not raising property taxes in the borough, council made the decision earlier this year to abolish the department, citing the fact that the state police provide protection nearly 60 percent of the time while the borough police department provides protection less than 40 percent of the time. It was concluded that the budget expenditures for the department were not cost effective. The council held a public meeting on the abolishment and received comments both for and against keeping the department. Following that meeting, the council voted to abolish the department. Councilmen Jim Smith, Mike Chilcote and Lee Rager did not favor the abolishment, but Smith was unable to attend the meeting due to work obligations. Smith has continued to voice his opposition to the decision.

When discussing the abolishment of the department, council promised to return tax dollars saved to the borough citizens. Members kept their word by voting last month to decrease real estate tax millage for 2009 by two mills (from 7 mills to 5).

Other business

In other business on Wednesday evening, council approved payment to Boyer & Ritter for \$1,697 for auditing the police pension fund. Earlier in the year, council authorized a payment of \$4,750 for actuarial services for the police pension fund. Council secretary Jack Fields pointed out that costs for these services will continue after the department has been abolished.

Council reappointed council President Rick Buterbaugh to serve another four-year term on the Parks and Recreation Commission and also agreed to again set its regular monthly meetings on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Fulton House. With regard to the monthly meetings, Fields told council members that he will send them an advance agenda on the months when he is aware of persons who will be attending the meetings and what the sub-

ject matter will be. Last month, Councilman Smith had asked for the advance information.

Council approved a request from the Chamber of Commerce & Tourism to bag the parking meters downtown from December 4-January 5 for the convenience of holiday shoppers.

Councilwoman Pat Frazier updated the members on the latest rounds of curb-cuts using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

Council also approved a final 2009 budget for the borough (see separate story in this week's "News.")

Regular business

During regular business, council approved the payment of November bills in the amount of \$10,173.78. Receipts for the same period were \$14,636.81. Checks were written for \$20,910.39, leaving a December 1 balance of \$24,386.36.

Council members present included Rick Buterbaugh, Travis Bard, Mike Chilcote, Mack Shaffer, Jim Smith, Pat Frazier and Mayor Jim Stenger.

The next regular Borough Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 7, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. at the Fulton House.

County Taxes

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demand for services goes up and the ability to pay for it goes down. This creates a problematic budgeting process that trickles down from the federal to the state, and then the state to the county. This process creates revenue shortfalls and higher expenditures. In the case of the Fulton County budget, the expenditures will exceed the revenues by \$297,557," the commissioners and Stanton summarized in their release to the "News" that shows total revenue in 2009 at \$5,946,125 and expenditures at \$6,243,682.

"The 2009 budget is very lean, and the county is fortunate to currently have a healthy balance sheet that can absorb the 2009 revenue shortfall. Two-hundred

thousand of the funding shortage is a direct result of the collapse of the stock market and the resulting funding need for the retirement plan," they added.

Several line items under the category of expenditures have decreased, though, including a drop of general government spending by 5 percent over 2008's totals due to staff restructuring and retirements. In addition, public safety expenditures decreased 10 percent in connection with restructuring the payment of 911 services. Furthermore, in connection with a successful spraying of gypsy moths through the county's residential spray program, a notable decrease of 29 percent has also been recorded under conservation expenses. Expenditure categories seeing increases, however, are judicial expenditures (6 percent) and human

services (4 percent).

In commenting further on the financial-related action taken by the Board of Commissioners on December 4, Commissioner Swain stated, "At this point the budget is a proposed budget. Because of how bad things are in the economy right now the budget could still change, and I would prefer to wait until after the final budget is approved at the end of December before making any further comments," he concluded.

Commissioner Keefer added, "We have approved a proposed budget, but it is still a work in progress."

The budget will remain available for public inspection at the commissioners' office during regular business hours. Final adoption of the budget has been set for Tuesday, December 30, at 10 a.m.

Jobless Rate

From Page One

Company Corporate Vision: "sustain an organization that provides opportunity and contributes to the growth and profitability of our owners, employees and customers."

In addition to JLG, Citicorp in Hagerstown has also announced massive layoffs that would also have an impact on Fulton County employment rates.

Rankings for Fulton's neighboring counties include Franklin at number six with an unemployment rate of 4.8, up from a rate of 4.7 percent in September and a ranking of number seven. Franklin is tied for the sixth spot with Cumberland and Montgomery counties. Bedford's ranking went from number 59 in September with an unemployment rate of 6.9 percent to number 65 in October with an 8.4 rate. Hunt-

ington County's unemployment ranking dropped from 57 in September and a rate of 6.8 percent to 54 in October, but with a slightly higher monthly jobless rate of 7.2 percent. It is tied with Clearfield, Carbon and Fayette counties.

In October, Chester County again posted the lowest unemployment rates in the state with a rate of 4.4 percent, but up from 4.3 in September. Adams and Centre counties tied for the number two spot in October with a 4.5 percent rate.

Pennsylvania's seasonally adjusted civilian labor force - the number of people working or looking for work - rose to 6,446,000 in October. Resident employment fell by 2,000 for the month, while unemployment was up 4,000. The labor force was up 157,000 since October 2007, with employment and unemployment up over the year.

Pennsylvania's seasonally ad-

justed unemployment rate rose to 5.8 percent in October, up one-tenth of a percentage point from September. The United States' rate increased four-tenths of a percentage point over the month to 6.5 percent. The state rate has been below the national rate for six consecutive months, and it has been at or below the national rate for 68 out of the past 70 months.

Over the year, Pennsylvania's rate was up 1.4 percentage points, while the U.S. rate was up 1.7 percentage points.

Pennsylvania's seasonally adjusted non-farm job count fell by 7,300 in October to 5,784,000. Job losses for the month were concentrated in two sectors - manufacturing was down 4,000; and trade, transportation and utilities dropped 10,500.

Since October 2007, Pennsylvania's job count was down 16,000. Since January 2003, the state has added 158,300 jobs.

Praises SF/Community Choir

To The Editor:

On Sunday, Dec. 7, I attended the Southern Fulton choir/community choir Christmas cantata. The performances were inspirational. I'm sure that a lot of work goes into preparing for such an event. I would like to thank all of those who were involved. Special thanks to Mr. Meredith for his time and energy in organizing

and conducting the choirs. Thank you to those in the community who took time out from their busy schedules to participate in the cantata. Thanks also to the parents who provided transportation to the students for evening practices.

Danny Crouse
Needmore

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The Fulton County News

A County Seat Weekly Newspaper

U.S. PUBLICATION NO. 211820

Periodicals Postage Paid at McConnellsburg, PA 17233

Postmaster, Send Changes Of Address To:

P.O. Box 635, McConnellsburg, PA 17233

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