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Sunday World-Herald



GARDEN COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES
Garden County Health Services in Oshkosh, Neb., would give up most inpatient services but keep its 24/7 emergency room and outpatient services and clinic under the new model. It would still be able to keep patients for observation for up to 48 hours.

Emergency model offers ‘lifeline’ to rural hospitals

Federal designation is intended to help small hospitals maintain essential services

JULIE ANDERSON
World-Herald Staff Writer

Hospitals, like any other business, have to take in more money than they spend. And that means they need a steady stream of customers — er, patients — to provide revenue.

But in Garden County, which spans 2,000 square miles in Nebraska’s eastern Panhandle and numbers about 2,000 residents, the stream of patients coming into the hospital side of Garden County Health Services in Oshkosh had dwindled to a trickle in recent years.

According to a recent count, inpatient admissions at the hospital averaged .07 per day and daily swing bed admissions averaged .05.

“They can be few and far between,” said Sam Pennington, Garden County’s CEO. “We can have two one month and then not have any for a couple of months. That really creates peaks and valleys as far as your cash flow goes.”

So late last month, the health system’s board — after holding meetings with employees and community members — voted to



NIKOS FRAZIER, THE WORLD-HERALD

An emergency room at Warren Memorial Hospital in Friend, Neb., on Feb. 23, 2024. Warren is part of the Friend Community Healthcare System, which became the first in Nebraska to complete the transition to the rural emergency model in early 2024.

apply to become what would be the second hospital in the state to convert to a rural emergency hospital, a newish federal designation intended to help maintain essential health care services in communities served by small rural hospitals.

Under the model, hospitals give up most inpatient services but maintain a 24/7 emergency room and are still able to observe patients for up to 48 hours. They also continue operating

their outpatient services and clinics.

In return, they get a 5% boost in reimbursements for Medicare outpatient services. Participating hospitals also exchange the cost-plus reimbursement allotted to critical access hospitals, another designation created in 1997 to help stabilize rural hospitals, for monthly payments that total about \$3.5 million a year.

Please see **HOSPITALS**, Page A2

Protests renewed after man fatally shot

Federal immigration officer shoots and kills the man in Minneapolis

JACK BROOK, STEVE KARNOWSKI
AND REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — A federal immigration officer shot and killed a man Saturday in Minneapolis, drawing hundreds of protesters onto the frigid streets and ratcheting up tensions in a city already shaken by another killing weeks earlier.

Family members identified the man who was killed as Alex Pretti, 37, an intensive care unit nurse who protested President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown in his city. After the shooting, an angry crowd gathered and protesters clashed with federal immigration officers, who wielded batons and deployed flash bangs.

The Minnesota National Guard was assisting local police at the direction of Gov. Tim Walz, officials said. Guard troops were sent to the shooting site and a federal building where officials squared off with protesters daily.

Information about what led up to the shooting was limited, Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O’Hara said.

Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said federal officers were conducting an operation and fired “defensive shots” after a man with a handgun approached them and “violently resisted” when officers tried to disarm him.

Please see **MINNEAPOLIS**, Page A2

■ **More Coverage:** The man killed by a federal officer in Minneapolis was a nurse who cared deeply about people, his family says. **Page A6**

US standing

President Trump’s European threats could cause lasting damage to US standing in the world. **Page A4**

School ratings

Changes to Nebraska’s school classification system will look beyond test scores. **Midlands**

Weather

High: 17 Low: -5
Cold; breezy in p.m. Details: A14

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