



AMY ROH/Tribune
In this file photo, David Dedrick builds a mound around a newly planted tree at Parkview Cemetery Oct. 25, 2024. The new memorial grove at the cemetery will be dedicated Sept. 28.

Living memorial

PARKVIEW CEMETERY GROVE HONORING ‘FALLEN HEROES’ TO BE DEDICATED SEPT. 28

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A new grove of trees planted in Parkview Cemetery last fall to memorialize Adams County’s fallen military service personnel and first responders will be dedicated in a ceremony Sept. 28.

Aaron Hyde of Hastings, local coordinator for the Nebraska Memorial Forest project, said the Parkview dedication event is planned for 1 p.m. in the grove,

which stands across the roadway south of Blocks W and Y toward the east end of the cemetery.

The main entrance to Parkview is at 13th Street and Elm Avenue.

The Sunday afternoon ceremony will include the presentation of colors, a prayer, and remarks and acknowledgments by Hyde and by Jim Meier of Waterloo, who heads up the Nebraska Memorial Forest project.

In addition, a special memorial flag will be presented to Hastings residents John and Pam Gaspers, whose son, U.S. Army 1st Lt. Kevin Gaspers, was killed in Iraq in 2007.

In October 2024, a small

army of 54 mostly volunteer workers turned out on a Friday morning to plant 150, 6- to 7-foot-tall saplings in a rough area of the cemetery that is unsuitable for burials and previously had been planted to grass and harvested for hay.

Since then, Hyde has recorded GPS coordinates for each and every tree in the grove and the name of an Adams County “fallen hero” has been assigned to the first 123 of them, thanks to the computer expertise of statewide project volunteer Randy Kassebaum.

“We build in 10% to 15% (extra) at each project those we don’t know of yet and for those com-

ing, unfortunately, in the future,” Hyde said.

The trees don’t have physical nameplates, but visitors will be able to find any specific memorial tree using a QR code to be provided on Sunday.

“The QR code will be able to direct them to their loved one’s tree,” Hyde said.

The Nebraska Memorial Forest project is being advanced by the Nebraska chapter of a national nonprofit organization called Honor and Remember.

The national group is best known for providing personalized memorial flags to the families

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Barber out as CEO of Mary Lanning Healthcare

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Eric Barber no longer serves as president and CEO of Mary Lanning Healthcare, according to a news release from the hospital issued Wednesday.

The change of leadership took effect Tuesday. “The MLH Board of Trustees acknowledges Eric’s contributions to the organization over the past 12 years and wish him well in his future endeavors,” the news release states.

Barber, 51, who resides in Hastings with his wife, Julie, and their two children, has served as president and CEO of Mary Lanning since August 2013.

Barber said rumors that he was escorted off the hospital premises Tuesday are not true. He said his resignation was a mutual decision between him and the hospital’s board of trustees.

He said he has no interest in trying to dispel any other rumors that are being talked about on social media and elsewhere.

“It was simply a mutual separation,” Barber said. “I’ve enjoyed my 12 years at Mary Lanning, and I wish the hospital nothing but the best going forward.”

Without going into detail, Barber said the hospital’s financial situation likely played a role in this decision between him and the board.

“Mary Lanning has struggled financially for some while as have a lot of hospitals, and we’ve worked hard on getting a lot of those things fixed,” he said. “We did a lot of good things during my tenure there.”

Barber, a native of Garden City, Kansas, earned his bachelor’s degree at Kansas State University and a master of healthcare administration degree from the University of Kansas. He began his career as a certified nurses’ assistant.

Before moving to Hastings, he had

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South Central Behavioral Health certified for new mental health payment model

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Gov. Jim Pillen recognized seven behavioral health care providers chosen to launch a new certification program designed to improve mental health and substance use care across Nebraska during a news conference Wednesday at South Central Behavioral Health Services.

South Central has been included in the inaugural group of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) in Nebraska. Other providers include CenterPointe, Community Alliance, Heartland Counseling Services, Heartland Family Services, Lutheran Family Services and The Well.

“I’m a farm guy. I love Nebraska. I want to think everything’s perfect in rural Nebraska, but reality is it’s not,” Pillen said. “The CCBHC model is an effort to overcome not only geographic barriers and expanded access to immediate

mental health and substance abuse.”

Implementing the CCBHC model in Nebraska is an initiative to enhance access to behavioral health care and enable providers to incorporate evidence-based practices into treatment.

The clinics have emerged as a result of the Excellence in Mental Health Act, signed into law in 2014 as part of an effort to improve the nation’s mental health system. Select states tested new strategies for delivering and reimbursing community mental health services, which is now being opened to the rest of the country.

States that have implemented CCBHCs report reductions in law enforcement involvement, hospital emergency department use and admissions to inpatient care.

Thomas Janousek, director of Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services’

Behavioral Health, said the model promotes changes to move toward a holistic approach to mental health care. It gives clinics the opportunity to expand services to meet the growing needs in their communities.

Instead of a fee-for-service payment model, the CCBHC program allows clinics to be paid for the actual cost of providing treatment. Nebraska is one of the few states that has fully implemented the model into its Medicaid system.

“It really is a model to help prevent people from falling through the gaps,” Janousek said.

South Central CEO Bob Shuey said the new model of care fits into the organization’s goals to offer a complete range of treatment.

“We believe you need to treat the whole person to get the best outcome and the CCBHC model allows us to do that,” he said. “We make sure people get to

the right level of care they need and get the wrap-around support they need.”

Chris Tonniges, CEO of Omaha-based Lutheran Family Services, said it will allow clinics to serve additional populations, such as military veterans.

“It is allowing us the flexibility to build programming specific to them,” he said.

Pillen said the goal is to get people the mental health services they need before it becomes an emergency situation. On the campaign trail, he heard about rural law enforcement agencies and emergency departments being overwhelmed with mental health crises.

He said the new model allows communities to ramp up services with 71% of the funding coming from the federal government.

“I’m committed to making sure no Nebraskan is left behind and

SEE MENTAL/page A3



WILL VRASPIR/Tribune

Gov. Jim Pillen speaks Wednesday at South Central Behavioral Services, recognizing the organization as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic. The designation allows South Central to provide more comprehensive treatment for mental health and substance use care.

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weather

80 TODAY Sunny. Calm wind.

54 TONIGHT Clear. Calm wind becoming south-southwest.

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