



GRANT COUNTY Herald Independent

WISCONSIN'S OLDEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2022

From Powderpuff, to Powerbuff, driveway painting, and spirit sticks, the student body of Lancaster High School had a lot of fun this past week - SEE PAGES 2A-3A

LHS Homecoming

Program making impact

SEE PAGE 10A

Chieftains clinch crown

Potosi-Cassville football takes tops of Six Rivers after beating River Ridge
SEE SPORTS

Express Scripts leaves veterans scrambling

Both Lancaster pharmacies will be out of TriCare network Oct 24

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
NEWSEDITOR@TDS.NET

Andy Robbins is not sure what to do next.

Last month, the veteran of the Korean War received a letter that he would not be able to get his prescriptions filled at Hometown Pharmacy after Oct. 24, as Express Scripts, the firm that oversees the TriCare prescription drug program, was revising the list of pharmacies that would be in-network.

The letter listed alternative pharmacies - Walgreens in Platteville or Dubuque, as well as Hartig Drug in Guttenberg, Iowa.

Why not the Hartig Drug in Lancaster? Because that location was getting cut out of the network as well.

The change is leaving many pharmacies and veterans in the dark of what happens next, as some pharmacies, and some veterans were not even informed of the change, having to learn it through word of mouth.

That is how Grant County Veterans Services Officer Ken McAndrew learned of the change. Unlike Robbins, neither he nor his wife, who both retired from serving, got a letter informing them of the change, and only found out when stopping by the pharmacy.

TriCare is the health coverage for those who retired from the Armed Services after a career, or had a medical discharge. Express Scripts, a pharmacy benefit manager, has been overseeing the prescription drug portion of the program for more than a decade, and signed a new seven-year contract with the Federal Government in 2021, which is slated to begin in 2023.

Since signing that contract, Express Scripts has gone on a spree of revising pharmacies that are in the network. This past spring, Express Scripts kicked out thousands of regional and independent pharmacies of the network, as well as eliminating Walmart and Sam's Club. They also brought in CVS pharmacies.

This fall, before the new seven-year-deal worth \$4.3 billion, goes into effect, they made more cuts.

John Wilson is a pharmacist for the Hometown Pharmacy in Cuba City. Wilson noted that for Hometown, each individual pharmacy is owned locally, and would sign their own contracts with the program. For this next term, Hometown pharmacy locations were not even offered a contract to sign up for.

"You can't go where you want to go any more," Wilson said of the changes, which will see 15,000 pharmacies nationwide removed from the network.

It is not any clearer for larger regional stores either.

Charlie Hartig is from the chain of 23 pharmacy locations that have his family's name on it. He states that in July, five of the locations received letters for new contracts to be part of the TriCare network, with reimbursement rates for drugs that were overall less than what they can buy the drugs for wholesale.

"I emailed them almost right away," Hartig said.

Calling is impossible for a place like Express Scripts - there is no designated person to contact to deal with the prescription drug network, and individual pharmacies have to hope their email will get a response.

Hartig had a number of questions about the program. How many of their locations would be part of the network, and how many will be out? Was there any negotiation on the reimbursement? What happens if they do not sign?

He never got any answers.

Hartig said they reviewed the reimbursement numbers, and for the



Arrow Cafe provides food for high school students

Expansion of the Snackpacks for Backpacks initiative now covers all three school levels

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN
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On Thursday afternoons, a number of Lancaster High School students stop Room 107, where they can get a snack before practice, or they can get some meals for themselves and their families for the upcoming weekend.

Named the Arrow Cafe, the project is an expansion of the Snackpacks for Backpacks program that was launched in 2019 at Winskill Elementary, and then expanded to Lancaster Middle School.

After its first month in operation, organizers feel the project has been a great success.

"It is open to everyone," said Beck Yaeger, one of the organizers of the Snackpacks program.

The Snackpacks for Backpacks program creates packages for students to take home every week during school. A bag usually containing two packages of single serve pasta, two cereal boxes, milk cartons that do not need refrigeration, juice, some fruit cups, and some snacks, are placed in a person's locker anonymously every week.

About 70 children receive packages each week between the middle and elementary schools. The cost of running that program is between \$1,000 and \$1,200 a month.

Wanting to expand, this fall the Arrow Cafe was started. Unlike the

Snackpacks | SEE 5A

Becky Yaeger and Bev Mattingly hold up some of the items available at the Arrow Cafe, a space in Lancaster High School where students can get snacks, as well as food they can bring home for the weekend. The program is an extension of the Snackpacks for Backpacks project.

Pet blessing

Last Wednesday, as a late recognition of the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi (which is Aug. 4) students and teachers of St. Clement School brought in their family pets to be blessed. St. Francis founded the Franciscan Order, to which the former St. Clement School Sisters (Sr. Eva, Sr. Angeline, and Sr. Rose Marie) all belong to. Known as the lover of all creation and champion of justice, he is the patron saint of animals and the environment. Therefore, Christians everywhere celebrate the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi by having their pets blessed. It did not matter if your pet was a dog or cat (very popular) or a rabbit or goat, all were welcomed for the event.

Photos by Josh Jensen



Network | SEE 5A

Snackpacks

FROM PAGE 1A

middle and elementary programs, the students come in on Thursday at the end of the day, and grab things.

Bev Mattingly, another organizer, noted that what they wanted to do is have it open to everyone to diminish the stigma of coming and getting things. She felt it really working, as some will just come in with friends, and while some grab a snack and leave, others will linger, and then get supplies to bring home.

Since the start, approximately 50 students come into the room each week, and for many it is merely to get a snack. Nutrition bars, Goldfish, and other items are available in handy packs.

But for a half-dozen, they are grabbing more.

The shelves have a wide variety of items. There are several cereals to choose from, as well as pasta sauce and pasta. There is a fridge with pizzas, fresh fruit and vegetables, meals.

"They are taking home food for their family," Mattingly states. "We don't care who the food goes to as long as it gets used."

Yaeger also noted that high school students consume a lot more food than younger children.

Many of the food items come from Second Harvest Food Bank, while other items are purchased from stores. They are purchased entirely through donations the program receives from businesses, organizations, or the funding they applied for through the annual Holiday Project by WGLR.

Mattingly notes they went and did pitches for companies and groups when they were planning the Snackpicks project in 2018, and those individuals and businesses have been generous. Some give what they raised with fundraisers, while others have foundations that give.

For those looking to donate items or money, contacting a school office is the easiest way to do so.

One thing they have added since the start of school has been personal care items. Yaeger noted that items like deodorant have gone fast, and Mattingly added they saw a request for mouthwash, and students grabbing their initial supply.

And students show healthy choices, as well as being kids - some of the recent requests were to increase the number of fruits and vegetables, as well as have something like Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

In addition to the high school students, teachers have brought middle school students into the room that they feel are in need.

Mattingly noted how appreciative the students are of the items, and that is reflected in anonymous responses the students gave about the program this past week.

"Great for a snack before practice, or to take home over the weekend," one student stated.

"It is a great thing for everyone, and good for a before-practice snack," another student said.

"There are a lot of kids who are hungry after school, so it's really nice to have," another student said.

"Amazing," another



The fridge in the Arrow Cafe has several meal items for students to take home.

student shared.

Mattingly also noted that just like with the Snackpicks program, the school has been supportive of the initiative. The school found a room for

them that works perfect for the program, which impressed the staff from Second Harvest when they were dropping off supplies.

Network

FROM PAGE 1A

name-brand prescriptions, the reimbursement numbers were so low, he couldn't see any way to have enough volume to even break even, no matter how much volume they could see.

Hartig said that some of the larger chains that are still signed up with Express Scripts, they may be selling the drugs at a loss, all with the idea that it gets the veterans into their stores, and they may do other shopping there.

Hartig did not sign the contracts for the locations.

Through letters brought in by patrons, Hartig has an idea of how many locations may be affected by Express Scripts' revisions to the network. The Lancaster location never received a letter for a new contract, and because it falls within a certain radius of the Walgreens in Platteville, it is his belief that the Lancaster location will be out of the network as of Oct. 24 - which is why it was not listed on Robbins' letter.

Hartig is looking at several locations being out of the network. Close proximities to other stores in Prairie du Chien, Platteville, Dubuque, and Durango mean those stores are out, while the Guttenberg location appears to be isolated enough to stay in.

Not that he is certain any locations will stay in.

TriCare itself does not make it any easier to see who is in or out. The website currently lists all authorized pharmacies,

even the ones who will be out on Oct. 24, and it is unknown how quickly the website will be updated.

McAndrew said that for other services, places like Grant Regional Health Center were part of the coverage network, but not listed for two years on the website.

Hartig stated they plan to have employees who are in the TriCare program attempt to run prescriptions through on Oct. 24 to see which stores it works, which ones it doesn't and what reimbursement rate it will be.

The shrinking amount of coverage has been an ongoing issue, with officials in Congress frustrated by the continued lack of transparency on the topic.

Letters from Senators and Congress people have been sent during the past presidential administrations, wanting more information.

This week, Sen. Tammy Baldwin requested information, since a number of residents of Wisconsin are being impacted.

"In Wisconsin, dozens of pharmacies will no longer be in Express Script's TRICARE network," Baldwin said. "Active service military members, veterans, and their families will travel to further, less convenient locations, to access their necessary medications, or select a mail-pharmacy option. TRICARE families across the country and in Wisconsin are being forced to find a new pharmacy within a limited network, all while we prepare for cold and flu season and

TEEN OF THE WEEK



The Teen of the Week spotlight is cast on Marissa, 17-year old at Cassville High School. Marissa Wieland is the child of Mike Wieland and Jodi Schwab.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: Yearbook Staff • Broadcasting Club • Business Club

HONORS: High Honors • Student of the Month • Teen of the Week

ACTIVITIES, HOBBIES & SPECIAL INTERESTS: Dishwasher at Anker Inn Smokehouse • Drawing • Hanging out with family and friends • Playing video games • Watching my favorite shows and documentaries • Being around my cats

VOLUNTEERING: Safe & Spooky Halloween for Stonefield

FUTURE PLANS: Attend Southwest Tech for Graphic Design and later advance my career with art

Marissa WIELAND
CASSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

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The first alternative veterans are told they can use is Express Scripts At-Home service, getting their medication mailed to them. This option is cited by the Defense Health Agency as a way the needs of veterans can be filled easily.

Farrell said that is fine for maintenance medication that a veteran gets on a regular basis, but that does not deal with the need for acute medication after an event.

Someone suffers a heart attack, or has an infection, and they are getting out of the hospital, or leaving a doctor's visit at a clinic, and now they have this prescription to fill. Instead of going to the local pharmacy, they have to drive to a pharmacy 20 minutes away, or wait for the item to come in the mail.

For many of those items, like antibiotics, they are on the cheaper end, and the veteran may decide to get the drug locally.

A provision in the TriCare program is that veterans can get reimbursed for drug purchases out of network, but they must pay for the drugs themselves, then file a request

form that they will not know will be accepted.

Farrell said that their pharmacies will do whatever they can to help their patrons navigate the process. She added that for many of the drugs, Express Scripts may also have a copay, so it may be a good idea for veterans to meet with their local pharmacist, review their prescriptions, and see what could be done locally.

Farrell said that the issue around here is the impact to the veteran, having to deal with either greater travel, or moving their prescriptions elsewhere. For pharmacists, the loss of customers has an impact, but not as much as some others that serve areas where veterans have gone to retire. Farrell said she was talking to some pharmacies in the Carolinas that were removed from the network, which meant a loss of more than half their customers in some cases.

For those veterans that are looking for help with their TriCare coverage, they can contact the specialist in Baldwin's office for more information at Christine_Rahlf@baldwin.senate.gov

CASSVILLE TOURISM IS LOOKING FOR AREA Organizations, Businesses, Volunteer Fire Trucks, Schools & Etc. FOR THE **LIGHTED PARADE**
Theme: "The Village of Misfit Toys"
Parade is Saturday, November 26, 2022 at 7pm
Return form by Nov. 14th to
Cassville Tourism, Attn: Parade, PO Box 171, Cassville, WI 53806
Forms available on Facebook, Municipal Building or www.cassville.org

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THANK YOU
I would like to thank Lancaster EMS, Grant Regional ER, Med Flight and all the card signers in Potosi WI. Special thanks to Bob Haberkorn.
TIM BLEICH

Looking for Vendors
Cassville Tourism is looking for vendors for Christmas in Cassville on November 26.
Please contact Tracy Fishnick at: 725-5180 or tourism@cassvillewi.gov if interested.
Deadline to sign up is November 18
NO VENDOR FEE

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October Events 9am-5pm
Until 17th Home Delivery of Apples
8th-9th Cheese Curd Weekend
15th-16th Caramel Apple Celebration
24th First Day of Gift Box Shipping
29th-30th Trick-or-Treat Weekend
TBA BOGO SALE! (details on website)
November Events 9am-4pm
4th-6th EverCrisp Weekend
11th-13th Veteran's Recognition Weekend
17th-20th Deer Hunting Specials
25th-28th Black Friday & Cyber Monday
December Events 9am-4pm
3rd Christmas Celebration & Craft Sale
12th Last Day of Gift Box Shipping
21st Community Chili Dinner 4-6:30pm
21st-23rd Customer Appreciation Days
23rd Last Day of 2022 Season 9am-Noon
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