

2025 Downtown Cruise nights off to a fun start



The Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce’s 2025 Downtown Cruise nights officially kicked off on Saturday, May 10. The popular night of fun was well attended by classic cars and people alike. Great Plains Federal Credit Union Hillsboro Branch provided free soda as a sponsor of the event and greeted everyone who came out. The next cruise night will be from 6 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, June 7.

Celebrating Autism Awareness: Resources

BY LAURA FOWLER PAULUS
FREE PRESS STAFF

**Editor’s note: This is the final article in a five-article series focusing on autism awareness. The other articles in our series can be found on our website.*

Once you or a loved one has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the Harvey-Marion County Community Developmental Disability Organization (CDDO) is a valuable resource.

“The Harvey-Marion County CDDO is the single point of entry for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to gain access to an array of services and supports so individuals can live and receive services in their own homes and communities, instead of in institutions. Autism is considered a developmental disability and individuals who have been diagnosed by a licensed healthcare professional can complete an eligibility application through our office to eventually receive lifelong support services,” said Executive Director Kevin Gaeddert.

According to Gaeddert, after an individual completes the eligibility process through the HMCDDO, targeted case management services are offered to those who have active Medicaid/KanCare. This service is essential to assist the individual and their family for advocacy and planning, as well as navigating any resources that may be

available outside of the Intellectual/Developmentally Disabled (IDD) Medicaid Waiver service system.

“Once a person is eventually offered Home & Community-Based Services through the IDD Medicaid waiver, individuals can choose from service types such as: Residential Supports, Day Supports, Supported Employment, Assistive Services and Self-Directed Personal Care Services,” said Gaeddert.

Gaeddert said that the State of Kansas IDD Home & Community Based Service system has a waitlist of 8-10 years before services can be started.

“Work continues at the State Legislative level to reduce this waitlist through the addition of a new Medicaid Waiver called the Community Support Waiver. The hope is that this waiver will be approved for use in 2026 and will assist in drawing down the current IDD Comprehensive Medicaid waiver waitlist and allow more individuals access to services.

For more information, visit harvey-marioncddo.com or call 316-283-7997.

Licensed Behavior Analyst, Heather Christner, BCBA, LBA, has worked for over 15 years in special education with the autistic population. She serves as the autism coordinator for the Harvey County Special Education Cooperative, but she also lives in Marion County and owns a private business here.

“I provide direct services to indi-

viduals with autism, do parent training and treatment plans. So I have a broad spectrum of experiences and resources. I’ve worked closely with the Harvey Marion County CDDO, and that would be my number one resource. I always check with families first to see if they’re connected with the CDDO.”

Christner also emphasizes the importance of early intervention.

“Early intervention is really important to start connecting with those resources, because there’s some funding and there’s some different services that they can access through the CDDO that most can’t get access to,” said Christner.

Christner said that in addition to the IDD Waiver, there is an SED (Severe Emotional Disturbance) Waiver available for mental health resources, which provides intensive support to help children with serious emotional disturbance stay at home and in the community.

“If they qualify, they can start getting services right away. That would be something that you would have to go through your mental health provider for. Prairie View is very well-versed in the SED waiver,” said Christner.

Prairie View has many clinicians and support staff at four locations that provide services to those on the autism spectrum. They offer

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Housing project for Hillsboro gets final approval

BY LAURA FOWLER PAULUS
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The Hillsboro City Council held a public hearing and approved the plat for the Orchard Ridge development project on Tuesday, May 6.

The \$8.9 million project, being built by Mennonite Housing, includes 24 affordable housing units along Orchard Drive near Dollar General and will significantly benefit the city’s long-term economic outlook.

During the hearing, Tony Hill raised concerns about the development’s drainage system and flooding nearby properties.

Darin Neufeld of EBH Engineering addressed the concerns and assured the council and Hill that there are sufficient inlets and culverts to allow for proper drainage for both the development and surrounding properties.

Byron Adrian, President/CEO of Mennonite Housing, said, “When we come in and do a development like this, we ensure that it’s engineered such that the water does not impact neighboring property. Whether we need to build up the grade a little bit at the edges, we’ve done that before to ensure that heavy rains will come and then go into the inlets and stay on the property—that’s oftentimes what we do. And up till now we have not had any issues with drainage going out on neighboring property. And we wouldn’t anticipate that.”

The council also approved an ordinance to establish the project as a reinvestment housing incentive district (RHID) and as a notice to sell the property.

City Administrator Matt Stiles updated the council on a delay with the fire station project.

“Our representative that was assisting us at USDA Rural Development is no longer with the organization. Her last day was after our last meeting. I’ve followed the directions on how to reach out to USDA but have not heard back yet. On April 30th, the legislative chief of staff for Representative Derek Schmidt reached out for information on the fire station project. Representative Schmidt wanted to put it back in the mix for funding,” said Stiles.

“They had a 24-hour turnaround deadline for information, so I recycled the same information provided to Representative LaTurner last year. It’s unclear what if anything, that effort will bring. The uncertainty at the federal level is creating chaos on moving forward with financing or grant funding.”

Stiles told the council that the Hillsboro Community Child Care Center (H4C) building is nearly complete.

“The punch list has been established, the subcontractors Wien’s are finishing up the last bit of the list. There will be two pay apps on the project—one for final construction and

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St. Luke Wound Care Center honored with awards

BY LAURA FOWLER PAULUS
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The Wound Care Center at St. Luke Hospital in Marion was recently honored with two distinct awards.

“We were awarded Excellence in Patient Satisfaction and the Clinical Distinction Award for all 12 months of 2024. The Excellence in Patient Satisfaction Award recognizes centers that have demonstrated superior performance in overall patient satisfaction results. The Clinical Distinction Award recognizes wound centers that have demonstrated exceptional success by meeting or exceeding clinical benchmarks,” said Stephanie Matthews, RN. “We are proud to be recognized for the quality of care our wound clinic provides our patients each day.”

“Patients are truly happy with us and their healing,” said Karen Larsen, DNP, MSN, APRN, who oversees the clinic along with Dr. Amanda Baxa.

St Luke Hospital has had some type of specialized wound

care services for 10 years. Partnered with RestorixHealth, the Wound Care Center offers custom wound care solutions specifically designed for rural and critical access hospitals, with comprehensive wound care provided via a team of clinicians.

“Our comprehensive wound care clinic has the state-of-the-art equipment and highly-trained staff to heal the most stubborn wounds. Patients are seen weekly in clinic on Tuesdays. We help patients form a plan for their care throughout the week. That can be self care, educating a caregiver, outpatient dressing changes or partnering with home care services,” said Matthews.

“Any type of wound that you can think of, we can treat,” said Larsen.

“We’re dedicated to healing wounds, preventing lower limb loss and optimizing outcomes for our patients. We specialize in the treatment of all types of non-healing and difficult-to-heal wounds including diabetic foot ulcers, venous ulcers,



St. Luke Hospital Wound Care Center staff Stephanie Matthews, RN, and Karen Larsen, DNP, MSN, APRN. They recently won awards for excellence in patient satisfaction and clinical distinction.

pressure ulcers, non-healing surgical wounds, arterial/ischemic ulcers, traumatic wounds, infected wounds, crush injuries and compromised flaps or grafts,” said Matthews.

Larsen said her favorite

part of working at the clinic is getting to help people, forming bonds with the patients and seeing patients heal while the hardest part is seeing people she knows hurting.

“Marion County is small,

so seeing locals suffering with wounds is hard. When wounds are complex or made more difficult by underlying conditions and we have to send patients on for surgical consults/surgery, that is tough,” said Larsen. “I love wound care. It’s an honor getting to take care of patients in our clinic.”

Matthews is the lead nurse, manager and clinical coordinator for the clinic. She provides direct patient care in the wound clinic and provides community and referral sources education on center services and benefits. Her favorite part of her work is helping people and doing the right thing every day for the health of the patients while the hardest part of her job is when things out of her control affect a patient’s ability to heal.

She is thankful for the opportunity to provide wound care to the community.

“We look forward to continuing our mission to restore health and improve the quality of life and access to care for the

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