

Lassen County Free Library (3)
Court House Annex 3 Room
Susanville, Ca. 96150

Cuts needed for '81-'82

Tight finances seen for county through June 30

With Lassen County in the first stages of its 1981-82 budgeting process, the picture for the current fiscal year looks very optimistic and the county auditor's office reports it will be tough getting through to June 30.

County Auditor Peter Ithurburn spent last week looking for an approximate \$180,000 which could be transferred from other departments into the hospital account to meet requests from that area. On Tuesday he went before the board of supervisors to inform them there is

enough money in the budget if the departments hold down spending and state reimbursements come in as planned.

HOSPITAL REQUEST - An original request of \$200,000 had come to him from the hospital, but in reviewing the hospital budget he found that \$180,000 would meet its present needs.

All departments, however, are in a bind, according to Ithurburn's interview Friday with the "Times". The county is expecting \$450,000 in state reimbursements from SS 946

which provides emergency legislation to reimburse the costs of most trials in Lassen County and other areas. This will only speed up receipt of funds by about two months. Of that \$180,000 will go to the Susanville Correctional Center for reimbursement.

The bill, sponsored by Senator Ray Johnson, was signed Friday by Governor Jerry Brown and is expected to have funds available soon. Last week Ithurburn estimated a total possible shortfall of \$125,136, but with reviewing the departments

and including the expected state reimbursements, he reported this week there would be enough money.

He also said that the overall budget problem could probably be blamed on trial costs related to the Madeline murders, inasmuch as state reimbursements are so long in coming back to the county.

In a May 18 budget session of the supervisors, it was reported there were \$11,564,700 in departmental requests and projected revenues of \$14,427,700. The approximate difference of \$12.2 million, plus an estimated employee salary increase of 10 percent plus a \$200,000 for a contingency fund make the total shortfall potential to the \$2 million figure.

PROBLEM AREAS - Several problems are currently plaguing the county budget. These include the

(Continued on back page)

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Students to be honored

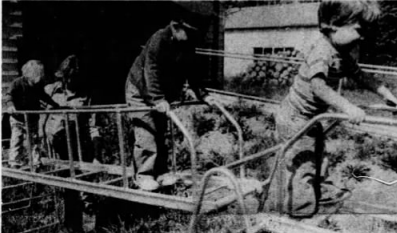
Lassen Union High School (LUHS) will honor its music students tomorrow night at the school's annual Music Awards, scheduled for 7:30 p.m. in the LUHS Student Center.

Awards will be presented to members of the high school band and choir, and the music booster of the year will be named, according to Band Director Ray Craig. In addition, several national music awards will be presented.

Deserts will be available before the awards ceremony.

News of the band's recent assignment to the Heritage Invitational Band Festival in Mexico next summer will also be discussed, Craig said.

Students are asked to bring some sort of dessert with them to awards night.



NEW DAY CARE CENTER - Sunshine Day Care Center under the watchful eye of director Jeanne Howard, three young servers, Dany Spores, and Todd Johnson, from left, above, play Friday on the equipment in the center's playground.

Day Care Center marks first month of operation

Susanville's brand-new Sunshine Day Care Center will mark its first month of operation this Friday, along with a growing enrollment.

Director Jeanne Howard opened the doors of the new facility to children and their families April 29, and new students and inquiries have been trickling in ever since.

Work on the building which houses the center began in July of last year, resulting in a bright, clean and modern facility. The building, unrecognizable as such now, began life as barracks at the Sierra Army Depot in Heriote.

The day care center, operated by the non-profit Lassen Economic Development Corporation (LEDC), is located a short distance south of the offices of KJLIE radio on Johnsville Rd. LEDC shares staff and offices with the Lassen County Council on Aging at 621 Richmond Rd.

The investment of money, material, and labor have created a day care center whose interior looks something like a well-kept home.

Carpet cushions the floors of many of the rooms, most of which have windows. Photographs, art and drawings, some of them the work of students, line the walls of the different rooms.

Emergency Room debate aired by supes

The Lassen County Board of Supervisors and the medical staff of Lassen Memorial Hospital yesterday heatedly debated changes the supervisors propose to make in operation of the hospital's emergency room.

The discussion often became emotional and antagonistic, and at one point caused one local physician to confront one of the supervisors, and then leave.

After an hour and a half of talk, the board voted to continue the discussions with the hospital community, which is composed of two supervisors, two members of the hospital's medical staff, and two members of the community.

The debate centered on amendments the supervisors propose for the contract the county has with the hospital's emergency room group.

The supervisors want to make each physician solely responsible for the collection of fees from emergency room patients they attend. Under the amendments, the county would not be responsible to members of the emergency room group for services they render, except to indigent patients.

Currently, Lassen Memorial provides billing services for emergency room doctors and the county pays 12 percent of the doctors' uncollectible bills. The physician assumes 85 percent of the uncollectible.

The hospital physicians told supervisors that if the changes were made the hospital could lose the two full-time 24-hour emergency room physicians it now has, Drs. Swanson and Larson. And if they left, the physicians said the county couldn't afford to hire a new physician or physician.

According to the physicians, the current agreement for emergency room billing provides the steady cash flow a doctor must have to stay in practice. The medical staff told the supervisors that Swanson and Larson couldn't afford to privately bill Medicare and Medicaid patients.

The doctor quoted figures which showed that 26 percent of emergency room patients pay their medical bills through Medicare, while only nine percent can pay out of pocket or have no insurance.

Medicare payments take 90 days to be processed, while Medicaid payments are processed in 60 days.

Supervisor Frank Kimberling and Jim Chapman both heatedly criticized the hospital's medical staff and doctors.

of the interests of keeping emergency up, would keep a lid on prices.

Supervisor Chapman came down hard on hospital management. "As members of the board, we have to start getting tough, and darn right mean as who's screwing up the operation out there, whether it's the doctors, the administration, or whoever," he said.

He accused hospital administrators and doctors of mismanagement saying "they're letting money go out the door."

At that point, one of the hospital physicians in the audience stood up and told Chapman he was "fed up with your badmouthing the doctors in this community," and walked out of the board room.

Fred Reger, the hospital's acting controller, noted that patients who pay \$100 a day for medical care at Lassen Memorial would have to pay about \$500 a day in Sacramento for comparable care.

The Lassen Memorial emergency room fee is currently \$28. For comparison, the physicians quoted emergency room fees of \$50 at the Chester Hospital, \$45 in the Modoc County hospital, and \$14 at Seneca Hospital.

The physicians pointed out that more doctors are needed in the county, a fact the supervisors and most residents agree on, but said the county must be able to guarantee a certain income to attract an incoming physician here, and should bolster his salary if that income isn't generated.

The supervisors also acted on two fiscal changes proposed to them by County Auditor Peter Ithurburn. Both changes were approved.

The first change raises the appropriation level for several county offices, including the district attorney, public defender, sheriff, and court reporter, by \$360,000 to meet the unexpected expenditures resulting from the recent trials of six California Correctional Center inmates for murders at that facility.

The second recommendation of Ithurburn's that the board approved was to transfer the county's contingency fund to supplement departmental bills.

From now until June 30, the end of the 1980-81 fiscal year, only "essential" items will be allowed to be bought from this fund. If a question arises as to what is an "essential" item, County Purchasing Agent Mark Totten will come before the board with the departmental request.

In other action, the board hired a new county librarian, Paul Knoblich, of Gillette, Wyoming. Knoblich will assume the position July 1, upon the retirement of Librarian Beth Hallen, who has served the county's book-lovers for over 20 years. Knoblich and his wife, Karen, will take up residence in Susanville in about two weeks.

Plumas County Sheriff seeks pair in Keddie tripple slaying

Composite sketches of two men "seen around Keddie" in relation to the April murders there have been released by the Plumas County Sheriff's Department.

"We're not saying they are suspects," commented Sheriff Doug Thomas last week, "but if anyone recognizes them, please call us and your information will be confidential." The sketches were compiled from information received by investigators over the six-week long investigation, Thomas added.

In later releases, the department said "The Plumas County Sheriff's office wants to talk to these two persons, as it is believed they have information pertinent to a homicide investigation which occurred in Keddie, Ca, on April 11, 1981.

Following the release of the sketches, Thomas did not expound on their significance other than what the official release stated. But the department is "still making contacts and following leads," Thomas said.

"There's lots of dead ends," Thomas said. "The suspects to our county youth several weeks ago for information concerning a party that victims Dana Wiggins, 17, and John Sharp, 15, were believed to be at earlier on the evening of April 11. At that time, Thomas assured possible informants that they would not be recruited for being a party that most likely included alcohol and minors.

But so far, no one has come forth with any information about the party, who was in attendance or who the two victims may have

left with, the victims were seen slinking toward Keddie from the corner of Crescent and Lawrence Streets in downtown Quincy between 9 and 10 p.m. that same evening.

The next morning, they were found, stabbed, bludgeoned and so on, strangled, along with John Sharp's mother, Glenn, 26, in the front room of the Sharp home. Daughter Tina Sharp, who reportedly came home at 9:30 that same evening to go to bed, has never been seen in the case investigations are all but certain that she is a fourth victim of the murders.

A multitude of blind alley leads and physical evidence have kept the sheriff's office and the state's Department of Justice busy on

the case since its inception. Compounding the case is that the Sharp home is in an area with homes that are extremely close by.

Blood samples and other evidence from the murder scene indicated some sort of struggle took place, according to the Sheriff's office. But no one heard anything, including two other children sleeping in the adjacent rooms, the close-by neighbors and late evening strollers who passed right by the home.

The investigation has cost the county approximately \$15,000 so far, according to Thomas. The overall cost is much more than that, but the time and equipment being utilized from DCJ is free, he added. The investigator's financial status is not in need of monetary help from the state at this time, Thomas said.

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