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Center for retarded considered for hospital

by Dan Ward

The possibility of converting WNC Hospital in Black Mountain to an extension of Western Carolina Center in Morganton, an institution for the retarded, was one of the proposals discussed by Dr. Sarah Morrow, secretary of the Department of Human Resources, in a meeting with advisors September 19.

According to Dr. Morrow's press secretary, Liz Martin, the secretary chose not to make any judgement on that proposal or any other until she obtains more information on costs and staffing in such a transition.

The proposal to convert the hospital into a 100 bed facility for the retarded was first raised by Dr. J. Iverson Riddle, director of the Western Carolina Center, in May, and repeated to the Advisory Budget Commission in Morganton last week.

According to Riddle, the center is already filled beyond capacity, and has a waiting list of 55 "acute, critical" cases. WNC Hospital already contains a satellite unit of the center that cares for 40 "chronic" residents.

Jack Ellison, administrative director of the hospital, said he had not been consulted on the possibility of converting the hospital to a center for the retarded.

Ellison said he is not opposed to using present and future unused facilities as an extension of the center, but said, "I think we still have to care for the type of patients we care for now."

A special task force assigned by Dr. Morrow recommended in a majority report that the treatment of tuberculosis, the original purpose of the hospital, be gradually phased to home care. The report, however, recommended that WNC Hospital continue to treat

chronic respiratory ailments and that unused facilities be used for other state institutional care.

"I think we should investigate his (Riddle's) proposal more for utilizing empty beds," Ellison said.

Riddle, meantime, said that he was not suggesting that the transition from respiratory hospital to center for the retarded be a fast one.

"My personal opinion is that if we utilize that facility, it would be a gradual phasing in. But we do need the facilities desperately," he said.

Martin said that Dr. Morrow has made no decision to abide

by either the majority report, or a minority report calling for a complete phasing out of WNC Hospital and Wilson Hospitals as respiratory hospitals.

She added that the secretary is still gathering information, and will not come up with a recommendation for the General Assembly for some time. The General Assembly reconvenes in January, and is expected to discuss the future of the state's three specialty hospitals soon after that.

An earlier hearing before the task force at the hospital drew an overwhelming protest of any attempt to

discontinue treatment of respiratory care there, including promises by a number of state representatives and senators to fight such a proposal.

The proposal to consolidate the three specialty hospitals into one has become a perennial issue in the General Assembly as a means of cutting costs.

Dr. Morrow asked the assembly last year to put off a decision until she could study costs and needs of the hospitals. Her report is expected to be complete at the opening of this session in January.

Mock disaster drill draws trained response

Rescue personnel and passers-by alike thought one of the worst auto accidents ever in the valley took place September 17 when a mock disaster drill was held near the entrance to Highland Farms.

One of a series of practice disaster drills, the call went out to Black Mountain Fire Department that 11 persons riding in two vehicles were injured. The department called for mutual aid from Swannanoa, Riceville, and Buncombe County, each of which sent a rescue vehicle and team.

Mock injuries ranged from broken bones and lacerations to a heart attack. "Victims" were transported to WNC Hospital where the disaster team there took over. The

drill, called a success by Black Mountain Fire Chief Gary Bartlett, was held as a training exercise for Black Mountain and hospital personnel, and as an exercise in cooperation between area rescue teams.

Rescue personnel were not notified that the "disaster" was actually a drill, Bartlett said.

On September 12, two engines and 13 men responded to an alarm set off at the Ingles warehouse when a forklift hit the sprinkler system. No damage was reported.

A fire on a gas range at the Fertiller residence on High Top Colony Road September 13, resulted in minor damage. One engine and eight men responded.

An investigation is under way of a report that lightning struck the top of a house at 106 Walker St. on September 14. Minor damage resulted. One truck and two men investigated.

September 15, two engines and 11 men responded to a false alarm at Highland Farms when the alarm system malfunctioned.

Two engines and 15 men responded to a false alarm at WNC Hospital on September 15.

The fire department ambulance made three emergency and one routine run last week.

The county ambulance made six emergency, 10 routine and seven unneeded runs last week.



Ernest Messer, chairman of the NC House Committee on Aging, tells senior citizens that the Lake View Multi-Service Center for the Aged is not only a good place to relax, but the core of local political power for the elderly. Messer spoke at the dedication of the center at Lake Tomahawk September 15. (Dan Ward).

Vote to close ABC Store unlikely

By Dan Ward

According to George Woodruff, who designed most of the advertising campaign for the the Committee of Concerned Citizens of Black Mountain to defeat the mixed drink referendum September 12, there is little chance that a petition to close the Black Mountain ABC Store will be filed.

"There isn't a chance in the world that that petition will be filed," Woodruff said Tuesday.

According to the Rev. Edgar Ferrell, chairman of the committee, "there is no plan to file it, but I can only speak for myself."

Woodruff said that members of the committee plan to meet soon in private to discuss the petition to hold a second referendum to recall the ABC store, but that the consensus is now that the petition will be dropped. Enough signatures have been obtained to call for a referendum, the committee reports.

Woodruff said he will oppose any attempt to close the ABC store, and that most ministers see the store as a lesser evil than bootleggers.

The committee has filed a financial statement declaring income and expenditures on the anti-mixed drink campaign at \$748.73. Many of the donations came from churches and individuals in Montreat and Swannanoa.

Expenditures went toward newspaper, radio and mass mailing advertising, with \$341.88 in printing costs.

Statements that Black Mountain may have lost

business investment because the September 12 referendum failed may have proved to be overstatements, the News has learned.

Mayor Tom Sobol, who is also co-manager of Valley Realty in Black Mountain, said that he had learned of inquiries from motel and restaurant chains second or third hand from other realtors and business brokers.

He did say he was involved in talks with one restaurant chain that may still establish itself here, although representatives "gave the indication" that passage of mixed drinks would have encouraged such a decision.

Chuck Ray, of Stepp and Nichols Realty, who manages a large tract of land near the I-40 exit at NC 9, said that no businesses have specifically mentioned mixed drinks in inquiries about the land.

He added, however, that "Holiday Inn has talked to some people out here. I'm sure this (failure of the mixed drink referendum) would have some bearing on it."

"As soon as they see that three years from now it will pass, they'll start looking at us again," he said.

Three of four business brokerage firms in Asheville said they have had no queries from businesses wanting to establish in Black Mountain regarding mixed drinks. The other could not be reached for comment.

"One broker said, however, that some firms have asked about establishing in Asheville, should that city's referendum pass in January."

Fire workshop reset

Because not all representatives of the Black Mountain and Swannanoa Fire Departments were available to attend a workshop on settling a boundary dispute between the two districts last week, the meeting has been rescheduled and was expected to be held at the Swannanoa Fire Station September 20 at

7:30 p.m. Martin Nesbitt, attorney for the Swannanoa Fire Department, was expected to present maps and insurance cost figures to those present to help determine the best balance of

cost versus response for the residents of the area between Black Mountain and Swannanoa.

The meeting is not a hearing, but only a workshop between fire representatives.

Voter registration, absentee ballot deadlines soon

The registration deadline for the November General Election is October 9. The Board of Election's office in the Courthouse Annex will be open the two Saturdays prior to that deadline, September 30 and October 7 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Anyone wishing to register for the first time or who needs to transfer their registration from one precinct to another may come to the office or they may call for the names of the three precinct officials in their own precinct and make an appointment with them. Voters who have not moved and who have been voting in Buncombe County do not need to re-register. If there has been a post office change, however, the voter should check to be sure that his registration is not being challenged because of undeliverable mail.

On Friday, September 8, absentee ballots and applications became available in the Board of Elections' office in the Courthouse Annex. Anyone who expects to be out of the county on November 7, or who is unable to go to the polls because of illness or physical disability may apply

for an absentee ballot, either in person, by written request, or a near relative may sign the application.

The absentees will be available until the Wednesday prior to the election, November 1 at 5 p.m. Ballots

may be returned to the Board until 5 p.m. on Monday, November 6. One-stop voting will be permitted in the office.

The Board of Elections will meet on Thursday at 10:30 a.m. for the purpose of approving absentee applications

until October 10, when they must meet on Tuesdays and Fridays of each week to approve absentee applications. Those meetings will also be at 10:30 a.m. in the Board's office.

Potter brings professionalism to Depot



by Dan Ward

When Ann Mardis agreed to teach an adult pottery class at the Old Depot in Black Mountain recently, Dr. Tom Cannon and the rest of the Depot Committee were joyful.

It's not that classes at the Depot haven't been successful so far — they have been and have expanded in popularity since they began. But having Ann teach a class there forshadows what Cannon calls a "coming of age" for the Arts and Crafts gallery and classroom.

Ann is a professional potter with a studio in Asheville. She is also director of the NC Crafts Organization. She has studied art and pottery at the University of Virginia, Corcoran Museum of Art, Penland School of Crafts, and Arrowmont.

Ann, herself, is excited about the Depot and its future. "The Depot is a very special thing to have in Black Mountain. It gives people a place to develop their talents, and offers new opportunities for classes," she said.

"A lot of those classes were formed, I found out, when so many people called and said, 'I know a lot of people who

want to learn such and such — can you find us a teacher?'" "It's working backwards, but it's a great way to use the facilities. There is so much potential here," she said.

Ann's first class was scheduled to start last Monday. It was cancelled because not enough people had yet decided to invest \$40 in the 10-week course. Classes are scheduled for Monday evenings from 7-9 p.m.

"What we want to do is sort of touch on all the ways to work with clay this first time, then let them pick out a medium they want to work on in the spring time," Ann said.

The class will study hand-building and wheel-thrown objects. Farris Ashkar built three wheels to use in the class, and in another for children taught by Sarah Struby.

Beside firing in the Depot's electric kiln, the class will also utilize primitive firing in smouldering sawdust, a technique that turns the pottery black.

Ann calls herself a "functional potter," primarily building objects that can be used in day-to-day living. Outside of her appreciation of function, she still regards her work as an art.

"If you use the pieces for day-to-day living and still appreciate their shape and coloring — then it's also a fine art," she said.

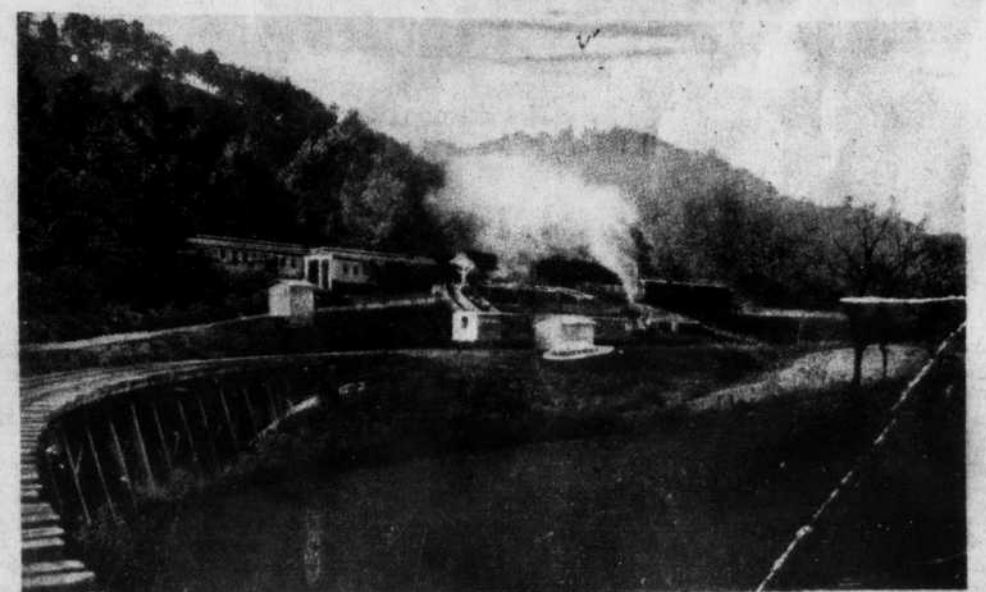
Despite her own appreciation of function, Ann said she will encourage students to work on whatever type of object that appeals to them.

"I don't want to impose my values on another person, except for a universal set of standards as far as esthetics are concerned — as long as it works as a piece," she said.

Ann said the unexpected makes pottery especially fun. "It's kind of neat. People will come and say, 'I've got to make a coffee mug.' They'll start making a coffee mug and have an accident — accidentally poke the clay or something, and say, 'that makes a neat design.' They'll end up making something totally different from what they had planned."

And teaching pottery in Black Mountain makes her feel like she is getting in on the growth of a good program, she said.

"I love Black Mountain and the Depot — there really seems to be a communal spirit here," she said.



The junction of the old Mt. Mitchell Railroad and Southern Railway, in a postcard submitted by Clyde Watkins.