

Repair of Clara Barton started quickly

(The following story ran in the April 26, 2001 edition of the Dispatch).

Within 90 minutes of Saturday's devastating tornado, work was getting ready to start on repairing Clara Barton Hospital.

Hospital Administrator Jim Turnbull said within one and a half hours after the tornado, workers from Ewing Construction – the contractor working on the new expansion of the hospital – had pulled a crew from a wedding dance and was starting to work repairing the roof. They worked all night and most of the day Sunday. There are probably 1500 patches on the roof from holes caused by flying debris, Turnbull said. The workers also helped board up the windows that had broken out. That fast

response saved the hospital from a lot more damage.

All the hospital is waiting on to reopen is electricity, Turnbull said. Once they get the "juice," they can open the emergency room, check out the equipment and finish cleaning up. Hopefully, the hospital will be back on its feet by the end of this week, or early next week.

Insurance-wise, the hospital is in good shape. The hospital has the best policy money can buy. Turnbull said, including business interruption insurance. That pays a portion of their costs when they are not able to be open – helping cover the overhead that continues.

Tuesday, workers were busy putting new glass in the windows, taking down the boards. Cleaning was going on full blast

inside, with professional cleaners helping get rid of molds and other things.

The new medical clinic that opened just over a year ago wasn't so lucky. The metal building will have to be replaced. The hospital is already looking for a temporary clinic and work is already starting on a replacement clinic. The hospital learned some things when it built the first one, and might change some things on the replacement.

The other doctor's clinic, that houses Dr. Dan Witt and Dr. Robin Durrett, had some roof damage but wasn't greatly affected.

After the tornado on Saturday night, patients were transferred to Central Kansas Medical Center in Great Bend and Hoisington Rehabilitation Center. The transfer was done without incident.

As I see it Hoisington lives on

(The following opinion ran in the April 26, 2001 edition of the Dispatch).

By LUKE BROWN

This community is a fighter. It will take more than an F-4 tornado to destroy Hoisington. The blood of the men and women who settled on this prairie more than 100 years ago still flows through the veins of today's residents, and I believe we'll be back, bigger and better than before.

This community has gone through disasters before. We've had storms, fires and floods. We've survived economic disasters. The oil crunch wasn't as dramatic as Saturday's tornado. It didn't sweep out of the sky and wipe out 20-25 percent of our population in a couple of minutes. It took a couple of years. The loss of the railroad in a railroad town didn't show up on the radar screen to give us warning. Those were economic F-4 disasters that knocked this community back, but didn't kill it.

Saturday's tornado won't either.

The overwhelming response of volunteers from throughout the state will help this community clean up quickly. Already there is a big difference from Sunday afternoon. We have been assured that there will be all sorts of state and federal help in the rebuilding process.

That will help take care of the physical damage. The emotional devastation will be tougher and take more time to repair. There is a grieving process we still need to work through.

But I see signs that people are already looking to the future and making plans to rebuild.

I like the community leadership. The positive leadership will help us recover. In my view, we have perhaps the best leadership in almost all areas – city, school, police, hospital and business – since I've been here.

Look at our successes in past years. Look at the drive for new Christmas lights. We raised a lot of money in a short amount of time. How about the Scout House? Money has been raised and the work has been done quickly. Look at the community improvement projects – that were very aggressive and ambitious for a community our size. The same attitudes that helped make those projects successful will help this community recover.

We mourn those who have been lost or injured, as well as those who lost their homes and belongings. But we rejoice that more weren't lost. We easily could have lost 50 people. Our homes, cars and clothes can be replaced. People can't, and we were very glad to see people safe after the storm. How they got out of some of those homes and businesses, I'll never know.

I have been very impressed with the organization of the recovery effort. There is no easy way to go through a disaster like this, but the coordination effort of law enforcement – especially Sheriff Buck Causey and Police Chief Kenton Doze – has been impressive, as has the coordination of the massive number of volunteers. Our county commissioners – especially Patty Linsner-Hansen and Kirby Krier – as well as City Manager Allen Dinkel and Mayor Gwen Christy, have done an outstanding job in almost unbearable circumstances. Allen wrestled with state and national media as well as helping with the recovery coordination effort while knowing his home had been lost. City Clerk Donita Crutcher is in the same situation. Area communities have bent over backwards to help. They were streaming into Hoisington from all directions within minutes of the storm.

Without prior planning and outstanding coordination, the recovery could have been much worse and there could have been more injuries.

This community is going forward. It will take more than a tornado to destroy Hoisington.

And personally, after the big boy TV and newspaper people have gone home, we'll still be here. This isn't a big dramatic story for the Hoisington Dispatch. It's our life. We want to go through the recovery with you, and look forward to future successes.

Traditional favorites return

It's Labor Day in Hoisington

(The following story ran in the Aug. 30, 2001 edition of the Dispatch).

There are a few things you can count on. The weather will always cool off – eventually; leaves will turn colors and fall and Hoisington will have one of the biggest and best Labor Day celebrations in the state.

This year, despite all the detractions caused by the cleanup from the April 21 tornado, that won't change.

The 105th annual Labor Day Celebration will kick off this weekend with all the traditional favorite events.

The 105th Annual Labor Day Celebration will open Saturday morning, September 1 with the annual community garage sale in downtown Hoisington.

The Labor Day Baby Contest will be held at the Roosevelt School Gym at 10 a.m. A total of 12 babies are vying for the title.

The annual Kid-die Turtle Races are scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. at the Hoisington National Bank parking lot.

The children's races will be held at 10:30 a.m. at the soccer field in Bicentennial Park. Ribbons and carnival ride tickets will be awarded for numerous contests for children 11 years and younger.

Sunday will begin with the 18th annual Kansas State Demolition Derby. It will be



2001 was anything but ordinary for Hoisington, but a normal Labor Day celebration in September helped residents keep moving forward.

held at 1:30 at Bicentennial Park. Adult spectator admission will be \$6, children 6 to 12 years of age \$3 and children under six are free.

Sunday's activities conclude with a dance featuring "Freddy Fox and the Hotrods." The dance is scheduled for 9 p.m. at Bicentennial Park. Adult admission will be \$5, children 6 to 12 years of age \$2 and children under six free.

Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 3 will begin with the annual White Line Fever Road Race 10 mile run from Great Bend to Hoisington.

The United Methodist Women's Flea Market will begin at 8 a.m. at the City Auditorium.

Again this year will be a Children's Parade at 10:10 a.m. All children under 12 are eligible. To be eligible for the Children's Parade, children must be in front of the high school

auditorium doors by 9:45 a.m. Children in costume will be awarded carnival ride tickets and ribbons.

The 105th annual Labor Day Parade will start at 10:30 a.m. Those attending the parade are encouraged to bring lawn chairs to watch the parade. No parking on Main Street is permitted during the parade.

According to reports, the parade could be one of the largest ever. There have been reports of extra effort and imagination going into construction of floats and other entries.

Following the parade will be car show judging, along with the annual 3 on 3 basketball tournament. The car show will be on Main Street and the 3 on 3 tournament will be held at Hoisington Middle School. Check in for the 3 on 3 tournament will be at noon.

Also on Monday, the

post office will have its first day stamp cancellation at the post office.

The Ottaway Amusement Carnival will offer rides and games all day Monday. Area organizations will also be sponsoring food concession booths on Monday.

To round off the day's activities, the Labor Day committee will draw the winning name for the cash giveaway at 8 p.m. in the Chamber yard. Tickets are available for a \$2 donation from the Chamber office, many Chamber members or others around the area. Tickets are available at the Hoisington Dispatch. Half of the money raised goes into the jackpot. The jackpot is rapidly rising and Tuesday evening was up to \$400. Watch the sign in front of the Chamber office for an update on the jackpot total. You need not be present to win.

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