

## Expanded Health Care Focus of Atchison Meeting (KAIR)--Expanding KanCare, and the benefits it would bring to Atchison.

That was the focus of a community meeting Monday, featuring a panel of local figures who discussed why the expansion of the state program, which provides Medicaid, is necessary for the well being of the community.

The meeting was held as the Kansas Legislature wraps up their current session, having made no expansion of KanCare, a key to the discussion during the afternoon panel assembly. Due to the inaction of the Legislature to expand the program, the Kansas Hospital Association decided to hold meetings about the issue at locations across the state, including the Atchison session Monday at the Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce.

Among those who addressed the issue was Atchison Hospital President and CEO John Jacobson. "Too many either still go without health care, or they wait until they have no choice to to end up in the emergency department...the most expensive and maybe the most inappropriate place to receive especially primary health care services."

Saying that those impacted most through the lack of assistance is the "working poor," Jacobson said legislation has been proposed to help alleviate the burden, but has gained little traction. "A solution to insure more Kansas citizens has been proposed by the Kansas Hospital Association. It's a solution called a Bridge To a Healthy Kansas and Legislation for this program has been introduced during this last Legislative session in Topeka. It makes health care for approximately 150,000 Kansans."

According to Jacobson, the expansion would be a benefit both locally, and statewide, both to individuals and to the Kansas economy.

Among the other panel members addressing the benefits of expansion, and the benefits it would bring to the residents of Atchison, was Jacque Pregont, the Executive Director of the Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce. "The expansion of KanCare would provide the extra help that [the working poor] need, so that they can get good, quality health care."

Other panelists during the media event were Dr. Norma Green, MD, Kathy Butler, RN, the Executive Director of the Atchison Community Health Clinic, and Lynn Marshall, an Atchison resident who relayed the details of her struggles when battling with major issues at a time when insurance was unavailable to her.

Hearing the concerns were representatives of the Kansas Hospital Association, who will continue to push the Legislature to make the KanCare expansion a reality in the future.

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