

Going for Grammy Who will take the top prizes

at the music awards? - 1F

NASCAR fever Revving up for Winston Cup



Argus Leader

Feb. 18, 2001

SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

\$1.50

Basketball tournament sites

South Dakota schools must decide how to schedule state basketball tournaments when the girls season switches from fall to winter for the 2002-03 season. The Elite Eight plan would have a separate event for each of the three classes and feature the top four boys and girls teams playing the same week in one location. Under the Minimum Change plan, tournaments would rotate cities with boys and girls playing in separate weeks.



Voni Hansen / Argus Leader

Season swap causes tourney turmoil

Change may exclude Aberdeen, Huron, Mitchell, Watertown and Yankton

BY BRENDA WADE SCHMIDT

Argus Leader Flip-flopping the girls high school South Dakota is forcing schools to decide on a new format for state tournaments and causing concern in small cities that could lose millions in economic impact.

One proposal under consideration would pull both boys and girls state basketball tournaments from rotating homes in Aberdeen, Huron, Mitchell, Watertown and Yankton and put them in Sioux Falls and Rapid City.

But supporters of a consolidation board member.

- in which the boys and girls tournament for one class would be held under the same roof - say it would basketball and volleyball seasons in restore a bit of the mystique lost when the state split the basketball world three ways in 1986.

> Putting boys and girls events in the same town also could potentially broaden television coverage and allow both genders to play in the larger venues, supporters say.

> It might be more like the old "State B" tournaments, when the interest of the entire state would focus on the event, said Kent Hegge of Baltic, the father of four athletes and a school

"You bring all the best in and everybody follows it," Hegge said. "It's just a major, major event."

There are three classes of basketball teams in the state, with B for the smallest schools, A in the middle and AA, which includes the largest 16 dis-

Under the threat of a federal lawsuit, the South Dakota High School Activities Association decided in December to move girls basketball to the winter and girls volleyball to the fall beginning in the 2002-03 school year.

That means girls will play basketball at the same time as boys.

So the activities association is polling its 192 member schools to see whether they favor one of two proposals for the annual state basketball tournaments.

An Elite Eight Calendar would combine the top four boys and girls teams from one class in the same town on the same weekend. This option would eliminate five South Dakota cities from holding the tournaments, primarily because of a lack of hotel rooms.

In this format, the boys and girls B tournament would be played roughly

See TOURNAMENTS, page 8A

As Sioux Falls hospitals draw patients from rural towns in S.D., Minnesota and Iowa, more families face ...

Life on the road



for medical care

We come here and we don't want to leave'

BY JENNIFER SANDERSON Argus Leader

Majessa Renee was born Jan. 3 at Sioux Valley Hospital with her bowels outside of her body.

Her parents, Tiffanie Von Hagel and Shanon Steele, knew from ultrasound tests that their child, born premature, would present a problem for doctors because physicians in Sioux City, Iowa, told them their home town hospital couldn't handle the surgery.

"When I first saw her, I couldn't believe she could even live," Von Hagel says. "I was scared to see her with a thermometer in her butt and an IV in her head and a tube in her nose. No one wants to see that."

Sioux Valley doctors have gradually threaded Majessa's bowels back into her abdomen. Now they must coax her digestive system into functioning.

It could take another six months.

The anxious parents now spend most of their days at the hospital sitting beside their little girl as doctors and nurses rush in and out.

"The most stressful thing is sitting here," Steele says. want to, or show her things vices. Top on the list is the or teach her. We come here and we don't want to leave. It's too long and too hard."

Majessa's family is like thousands of other parents and relatives whose lives have been dis-

rupted by the illness of a family member cared for in a Sioux hospital. Falls They're drawn by the increasing number of doctors practicing speciality medicine shelley not found elsewhere Nelson Hanlsch go around. in the region.

from Sioux Falls and the tration Medical Center, esti-studying expansion plans, them at all." small towns surrounding it, mates that the VA lodges says Shelley Nelson Every Monday through city hospitals estimate that about 150 veterans and spon- Hanisch, executive director. Friday for the past four at least 25 miles away.

Many are faced with questions about their essential needs:

■ Where will they stay? How will they pay for medical care?



Melodie Smith studies while her mother, Lana, works on a craft project in the room they share at the Ronald McDonaid House in Sioux Falls. Melodie is receiving treatment for a tumor on her lower spine at the Cancer Institute at McKennan Hospital. TOP: Shanon Steele smiles as Tiffanie Von Hagel tickles their daughter Majessa's foot while spending time with her in the Sioux Valley Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

bills back home?

Who will watch the kids? ■ Who will look after the house and the pets?

■ When will they be able to go home?

Both Sioux Valley and Avera McKennan hospitals employ social workers to "We can't hold her like we help guide families to ser-Ronald McDonald House, where Von Hagel and Steele are staying.

> It accepts families with children ages 21 and

younger receiving treatment. Other families typically search for lodging in motels close to hospitals, in private homes or with friends and family.

Often, there are

expand, Porzio adds.

McDonald House, one of of tingling sensations and McDonald House, she physically. 206 worldwide, helped more numbness in her legs, doc- hands the driver a voucher

98 pages

Where patients come from Sioux Falls medical services bring patients

from parts of four states. Last year, more



Source: Argus Leader research

Marty Two Bulls / Argus Leader

not enough rooms to porary quarters during med- backbone. ical treatment in Sioux Falls.

extended-care facility has families now staying at the House at 1:30 p.m. to take rest," Melodie says. seen increased use by aging nine-bedroom home in cen- Melodie to the hospital for veterans and must soon tral Sioux Falls.

How will they pay the than 800 families find tem- tors found a tumor along her and asks to go to McKen-

"It was taking my legs

radiation therapy.

One mom's story 4A

nan's Cancer Institute.

"The vouchers from the Ronald McDonald House are wonderful because we don't have a car here and we can't afford to be going back and forth all the time," says Lana Smith, who lives in Chester.

Melodie has passed the halfway point in her 25-treatment radiation cycle. She and her mother will stay at the Ronald McDonald House throughout the month.

The treatments take about 20 minutes each, but Melodie's drained for much of the afternoon. When she gets her second wind, she studies in the room she shares with her mother at the house, or the two catch a city bus and window shop.

Surgeons removed most Ron Porzio, direc- Demand is so high, the from me," says Melodie, 18. of the tumor last August, but In addition to patients tor of the Veterans Adminis- Ronald McDonald board is "Sometimes, I couldn't feel the cap had bonded with nerves at the base of Melodie's spine.

"They didn't want to parathey treat more than 20,000 sors a month at local hotels. Melodie Smith and her weeks, Lana has summoned lyze me, so they left it and patients annually from towns The VA's own 30-bed mother, Lana, are among the a cab to Ronald McDonald said radiation could kill the

The Smiths say their stay at the Ronald McDonald Last August, after When the taxi comes to House has made a difference Last year, the Ronald Melodie had endured weeks pick her up at the Ronald financially, emotionally and

See COPING, page 5A

Saddam: U.S. WIII pay for bombing

BY WAIEL FALEH

Associated Press threatened to retaliate for a for the aggressive Amerimajor U.S.-British airstrike cans," the paper added. It did on its air defense system, not say how Iraq would retalwhile people in the street iate. insisted on Saturday that the raids only stiffened their sup- Saturday with his top aides to port for Iraqi leader

Saddam Hussein. Two people were killed and 20 were wounded in Friday night's missile attack on air defense and radar sites south of Baghdad, the official

died early Saturday.

"The American adminisstate-run newspaper Alskies from illegal American- Israeli control.

British airstrikes.

"This crime will not go BAGHDAD, Iraq - Iraq without strong punishment

Saddam, meanwhile, met discuss

airstrikes, according MORE to a report by the offi-Inside cial Iraqi News Critics call for new Agency. Iraq strategy; world

"The meeting disreaction to the cussed last night's bombing Stories, 9A American aggression and the military

Iraqi News Agency reported. measures and steps needed The first fatality, a woman, to be taken to respond to died hours after the 9 p.m. America and those who help attack. The second, a man, her in case this aggression is repeated," the agency said.

The agency reported that tration claimed the strikes Saddam on Saturday ordered were in self-defense," the the formation and training of 21 divisions, or about 300,000 Qadissiya said in a front-page men, across the country to editorial. "They are laughing serve as the nucleus of a volat the world by telling such unteer force whose declared lies. Iraq was defending its aim is to free Jerusalem from

Exotic animals sold at auction

Jasper forced to liquidate private zoo

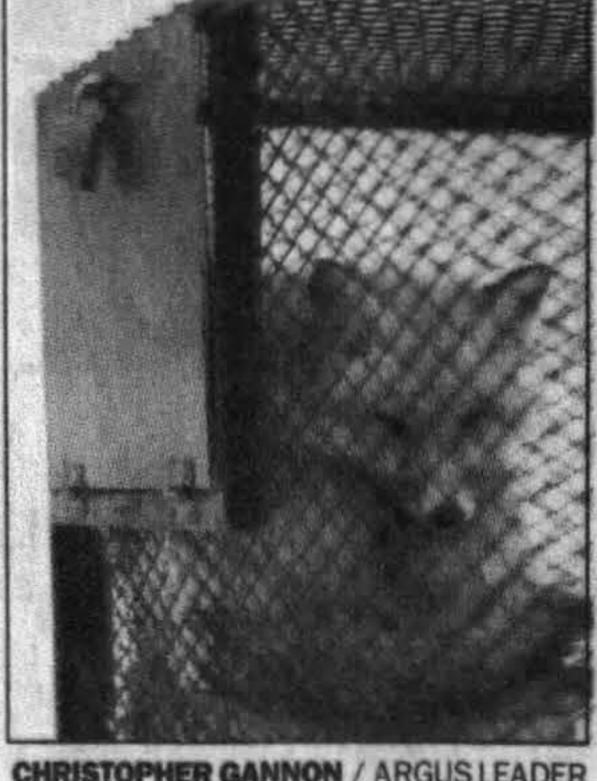
BY PETER HARRIMAN Argus Leader

In the concrete and steel pens that have been their homes, wolves paced nervously and a cougar stretched out low as it crossed its enclosure and quietly growled Saturday morning while strangers looking to buy milled about outside the bars.

In a nearby field, tools, machinery, household goods and recreational gear were arrayed in long lines, where they drew the casual attention of bidders bundled up against sub-zero chill.

For both animals and humans at Jasper's Exotic Farm, it was a tense time as an auction ended David in his rural neighborhood. Jasper's dream of a private

and at the same time appeared to eliminate what had been a



CHRISTOPHER GANNON / ARGUS LEADER A fox sits behind a locked cage door Saturday morning during an auction at Jasper's Exotic Farm.

lightning rod of controversy

Jasper's other business. zoo, five miles west of Sioux D&J Glass, has been under public siege in recent The liquidation cast the months as customers around future of Jasper's collection of the country complained he nondomestic animals, tropical had not returned items sent birds and waterfowl in doubt to Sioux Falls for restoration.

See JASPER, page 14A

INDEX

	Ann Landers	5F
	Birthdays	7F
	Business	D
	Classified	E
	Comics Ins	side
	Crossword	7E
	lobe	E

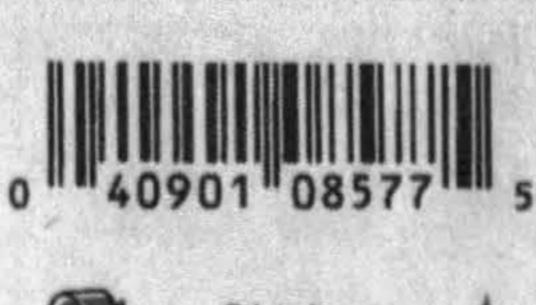
Movies National 3-13A Obituaries 12B Opinion 14-15B Channels World 3,9-10A

Lotteries

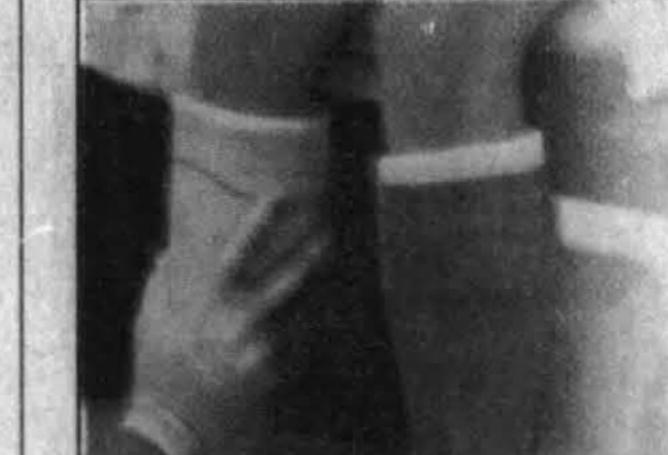


Increasing clouds Full report, 2A

© 2001 Gannett Co., Inc.







Compassionate Care is Just Around the Bend

Avera McKennan Hospital & University Health Center

'I have to be with him,' says ill infant's mother

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2001

Separation exacts heavy toll on parents, other child

BY JENNIFER SANDERSON

Argus Leader

For four months, Amy Camp- with her father in Miller. bell kept a medical vigil at her son's crib, against a rear wall in we've taken lots of photos of them to position him in her arms. the neonatal intensive care unit at Avera McKennan Hospital.

Oct. 19, Gunner weighed a little not at home." more than five pounds. One tube feeds him. Another helps him breathe. But a genetic disorder difficult for him to breathe.

"When it's your child, you do what you need to," said the 31- "It's one of the hardest things "I worry about Mike being lonely year-old mother. "It's almost a about being here day after day," and overworked and if we can weakness, that I have to be with Another family will come, and make ends meet. He worries him. I can't leave."

miles away from her home in we're still here." Huron, Campbell tried to sort Since Gunner's birth, Camp- tubes and sneak Gunner out the such a small package.

ner's father, Mike Sanderson, who Sanderson met their son's flight about \$15,000 a day for Gunner's tened patiently to doctors who told dren's Hospital. There, specialists wanted to hear.

Sioux Falls wasn't the answer breathe on his own. for Gunner. He needed other doc- "It was comforting and encour- the health-care coverage she needmore specialized care.

Gunner most likely has Simpson- helped care for Gunner at Avera the way too. I've worked since I genetic condition. Only 12 cases kinds of babies more often, they previously have been documented. The disorder is an offshoot of Beckwith-Wiedemann syndrome ings about seeing Gunner leave. and shares many symptoms and Because nurses work rotating treatments. A form of gigantism is shifts, she'd done everything from part of Gunner's condition, and he tuck in Gunner for the night to likely will need continued reduction surgeries until he's 8 or 10, the ages between which both syndromes taper off.

With Sioux Falls' role as a regional medical center growing. Campbell's time here is not atypical. She had spent a month hospitalized before Gunner's birth, and in the four months after, her life took on a pattern.

book from her aunt's library. She'd leave her aunt's home by 10

year-old daughter, Alora, stayed tunes from "The Lion King."

together," Campbell said. "But I Pulling loose his feeding tube Delivered by Caesarean section issues, some feelings that 'Mom operating room. nearly three months premature on loves the baby more' because I'm At about 9 p.m., around the time

Every month, Campbell saw threatens his airway. His enlarged other babies leave the neonatal home. The couple talked every tongue and misaligned jaw make it intensive care unit to start their night on the phone. lives at home with their families.

we'll get to know each other. I'll about me being here, and how his She left Gunner's side only to have lunch with other moms. But son is doing. shower and sleep at her aunt's we're here when they come in, home in Sioux Falls. Some 130 and then they get to go home, and

through feelings so big it's hard to bell's been home to Huron four back door," she said. believe they're wrapped up in times. The most recent visit, on Both Campbell and Sanderson Feb. 7, was only to prepare for a worry about the bills. While at At night, she talked with Gun- longer trip. Last Monday, she and McKennan, Campbell said it cost stayed in Huron to work. She lis- from McKennan at St. Louis Chil- care. Not long before she was put her everything but what she most hope to perform the first of sever- Campbell quit her factory job. The al operations Gunner will need to work brought in about \$30,000 a

tors, other treatments, and last aging for all of us when Gunner's ed through her employer. Gunner week, his parents took him to St. mom said that there were about 17 Louis Children's Hospital for babies with the same syndrome down at St. Louis," said Bonnie other people are paying for his Geneticists there determined Bertelsen, a registered nurse who care," she said. "But I've paid along Golabi-Behmel syndrome, a rare McKennan. "If they deal with those was 18, and I think maybe I've know best what to do for him."

Still, Bertelsen had mixed feelread to him during the day.

"It's quite a relationship," she says. "You get to care for them, and Gunner was so cuddly and wanted to be held. We usually have babies here until their due date and then they go home. We got to know Gunner's personality."

A mom's routine

During her time in Sioux Falls, Every few days, she finished a Campbell established a routine. Every weekend, Sanderson a.m., then head to the hospital. liness, then made the two-hour watching his monitors and flip- n't going to give up on him because Gunner's jaw forward to align

drive from Huron. Campbell's 10- ping the cassette tape that played

She could hold him, but she'd "She visited in Sioux Falls, and have to navigate a tangle of tubes know she has some abandonment would mean a trip back to the

Sanderson would be ending his shift as a route driver for the Pep-Short-term relationships si Bottling Co., Campbell would leave the hospital for her aunt's

"We both worry, but we worry "That's so hard," Campbell said. in different ways," Campbell said.

"I miss Mike horribly and I miss Alora horribly, and sometimes I just want to unhook all these

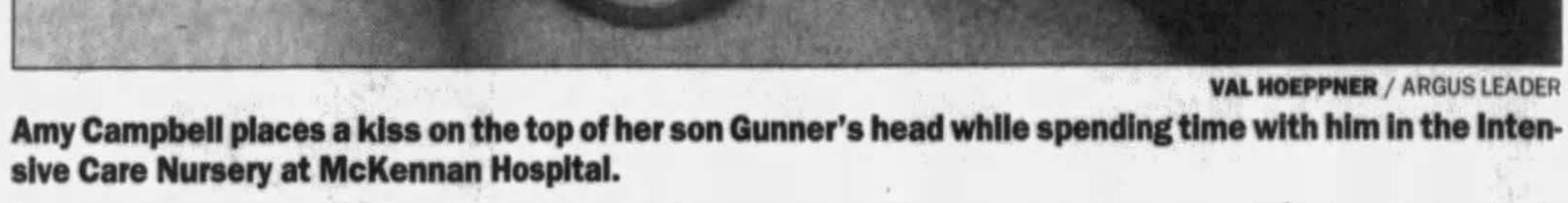
on bed rest prior to the delivery, year, but Campbell couldn't get now is on Medicaid.

"I sometimes feel bad because earned the right to have this help."

Gunner's condition

After Campbell's first ultrasound, at 24 weeks, her doctor knew something was wrong. A week later, she went into labor, but doctors slowed her progress and were able to stave it off a number of times. At first, she says, that initial ultrasound seemed to point to a rare type of infantile kidney disease. Children born with the condition need transplants to survive, but few grieving parents offer babies as organ donors.

"The doctors talked about the they talked about ending the preg-



he wasn't what most people consider to be the picture-perfect baby."

Months after Gunner's birth, his parents received encouraging news. Gunner didn't have the rare kidney disease after all, and with

that discovery came fresh hope. Gunner's tongue and jaw, choices we had at that point, and though, still are a problem. Thursday, doctors at St. Louis Chilnancy," Campbell said. "But that dren's Hospital drove screws into the bit different," she said. "For and the jobs and the separation choice wasn't an option for us. I wait- Gunner's jaw. Little by little, about a month after he was born, I and everything else. But that's not weighed road conditions and lone- She'd be by Gunner's side all day, ed 10 years for Gunner, and I was- they'll turn the screws, bringing felt very guilty, like I had done this." going to happen. And that's what

joints and air passages.

Gunner will need additional procedures down the line, and Campbell hopes St. Louis Children's Hospital will be the farthest they must travel.

a recessive thing, you wonder if it tiful baby, but that's not reality,"

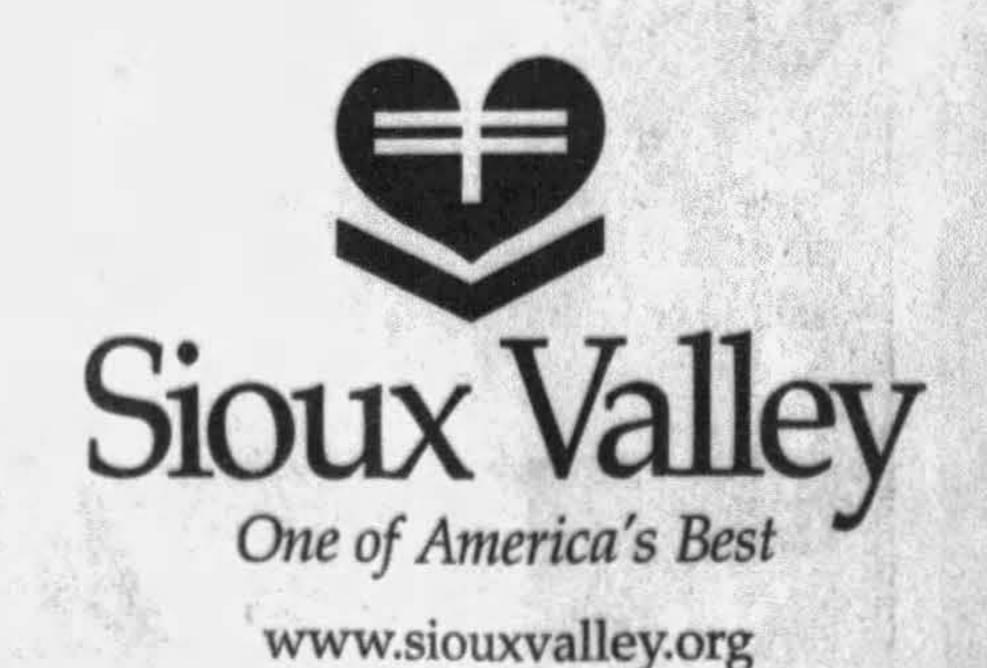
Beyond that, she wonders what you live with."

comes next. The few times she's been home, she's hurried past the door of Gunner's room. It's full of toys in pale blues, but it feels empty, she said.

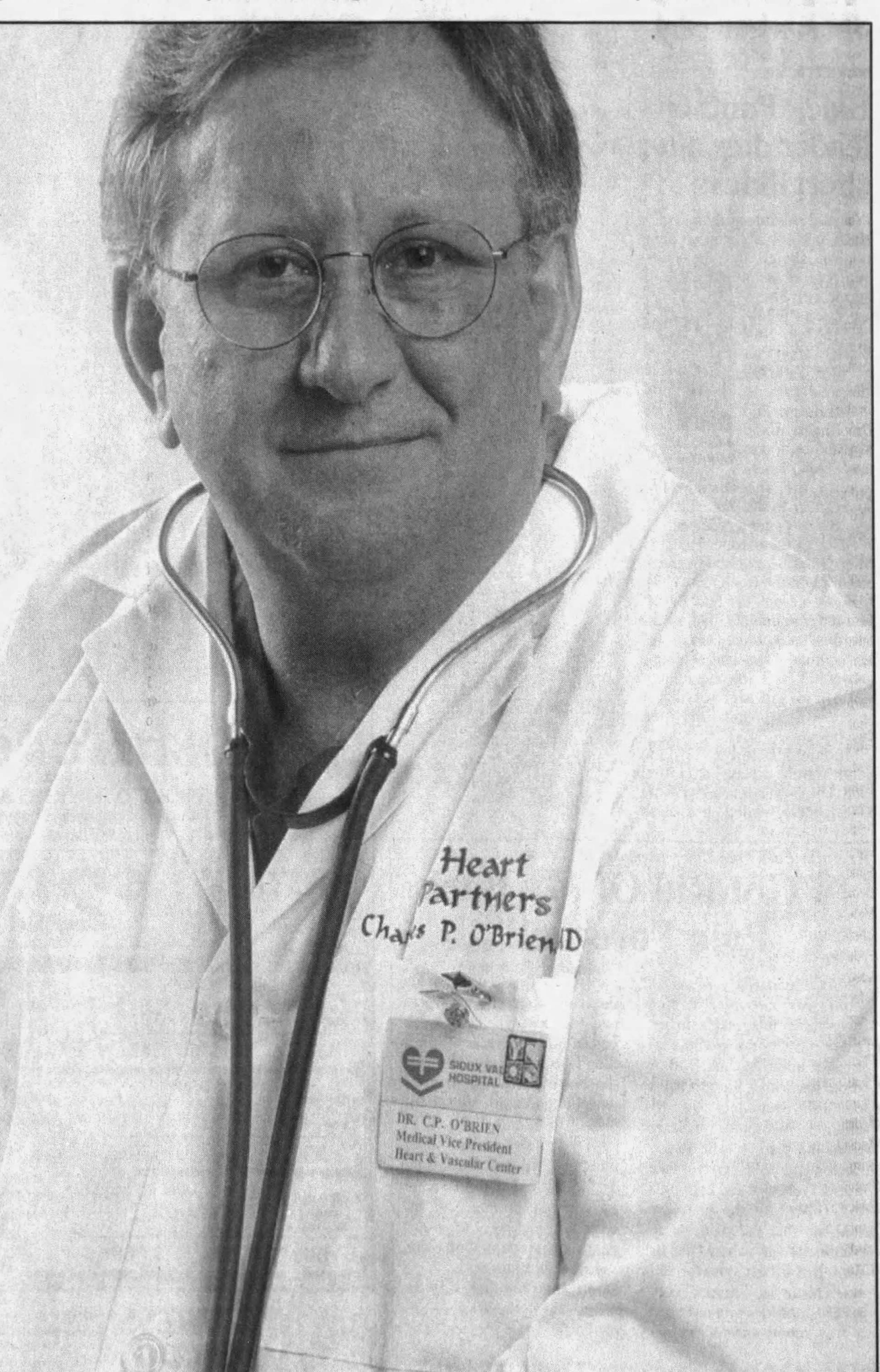
"The only thing you should "Because this is a genetic thing, have to worry about is your beauwould've happened if you'd eaten | Campbell said. "You wish somebetter or just done something a lit- one would sweep away the bills

T I want you to about heart attack pain.

> When chest pain starts, you can ignore it. But if it's a heart attack and you ignore it, you're in danger. I want you to learn about that pain - which feels different for women than it does for men. Log onto our web site at www.siouxvalley.org, and learn more about the pain you dare not ignore.



Healthformation-333-4444 or 1-800-445-5788



Coping: Families find help in city

Continued from 1A

That's reassuring to Nelson Hanisch, who has been with Ronald McDonald House since it was built 18 years ago. She says increased demand has driven program changes, noting that when the nine rooms at the house are full, as they were 118 nights last year, families are offered hotel vouchers. Last year, 246 families used the voucher program.

"We used to have waiting lists, and we don't do that any more," Nelson Hanisch says. "We don't want to turn anyone away."

About a year and a half ago, the Ronald McDonald House board approved waiving the \$5 nightly fee. The house is free to families with children 21 years old or younger. Previously, only families with children 18 and younger were accepted.

In 2000, the Ronald McDonald House spent more than \$11,000 on rooms in motels such as Valley Inn, across Grange Avenue from Sioux Valley, and Center Inn, on the McKennan campus. The house also spent nearly \$850 on transportation for its families. That money comes from the \$160,000 Hanisch and her board must raise annually for operating costs not covered by corporate and private donations.

Valley and Center inns each have about 60 rooms, and both have seen increased business this year due to the harsher winter. People don't want to risk leaving a sick relative and not being able to get back.

"We usually have rooms, unless bad weather comes up," says Sam Alick, owner of the Valley Inn.

"We've been full Sundays through Thursdays for the past few months," says Center Inn manager Jana Norby. "A lot of our guests come from the hospital here, and we'll make up waiting lists and recommend other places to stay."

Using the hotels and its own facilities, Sioux Falls' Ronald McDonald House has hosted families from 17 states and served more than 6,000 families altogether.

"We have one family who came, off and on, for 15 years," says family services coordinator Dee Lundeen, who's the only other member of Hanisch's staff.

dren wouldn't have had that chance," she says. "They would get compassionate care, their parents would get counseling, and that was it."

Specialized care

The number of medical specialties practiced by doctors in Sioux Falls nearly doubled between 1994 and 2001.

Nuclear medicine Allergy Rheumatology Endocrinology Neonatal-perinatal medicine Oncology Pulmonary disease Gastroenterology **Emergency medicine** Dermatology Neurology Otology, laryngology Physical medicine Urological surgery Ophthalmology Pathology General surgery Orthopedic surgery Radiology Psychiatry Anesthesiology Obstetrics-gynecology Pediatrics Cardiovascular disease Internal medicine Family practice Other Dermatopathology Pediatric endocrinology Pediatric oncology Pediatric surgery Preventive medicine Vascular medicine Pediatric critical care Diagnostic radiology Gynecology Hematology Maternal-fetal medicine Obstetrics Pediatric neurology Vascular surgery Infectious disease Interventional radiology Neurological radiology Plastic/reconstructive Plastic surgery Neurological surgery Pediatric cardiology Radiation oncology Surgery Occupational medicine Child psychiatry Cardiac surgery

TOTAL *Numbers as of Feb. 12, 2001

Source: S.D. Medical Association Voni Hansen / Argus Leader



PHOTOS BY VAL HOEPPNER / ARGUS LEADER

Donna Hannon

phone to a rela-

husband Harvey

Sloux Falls. The

Conde couple

came to Sloux

Falls after Har-

vey fell on the

Ice and broke

his hip, needing

surgery to repair

It. Sloux Valley

Donna Hannon

private home

could stay for

\$15 a night.

campus. For example, a cleft lip

and palate clinic within the hospi-

so parents can make one visit.

we're supposed to be doing."

very different group of patients.

can be made in some cases.

beneficiary travel," Porzio says.

'It's been a long road'

the Zwaans, who live in Luverne,

spent 11 months at a Ronald

McDonald House in Michigan

"Families want these veterans

where she

find a room in a

staff helped

rests in bed at

Sloux Valley

Hospital in

tive while her

talks on the

Melodie Smith walks out to meet a taxi that will take her and her mother, Lana Smith, to Avera McKennan for Melodie's radiation treatment. The Smiths are staying at the Ronald McDonald House, which provides vouchers for taxi rides to and from area hospitals.

Staying closer to home means families have a better chance of staying together, she says. "Personal contact is second-best to what a doctor is doing."

'It can be scary'

Marcene Dickes, a registered nurse and mother of five, knows that to be true. She spent four months away from home in 1996, when son Patrick, then 15, fell ill. Surgeons at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., removed Patrick's spleen and part of his pancreas.

"You feel like you can't do anything to help," says Dickes, director of the Women's and Children's Center at McKennan. "You run your home from remote con-"Years ago, some of these chil- trol. You clutch and cling to every word they tell you."

Patrick made a full recovery, and the experience left Dickes with new appreciation for the families she sees at the hospital.

and physicians they know and given month, Dickes says. trust," she says.

'We get along great'

lance, and they're asking, 'Who's your orthopedic surgeon?" Don- updates on the patient's treat- they should say," she says. "We use the same approach to treat a na Hannon says. "Well, we don't ment and progress to the home- talk by phone because it scares have any idea. We don't have one of those."

Donna to stay. Sioux Valley's staff have that service." helped her look through lists to find a room in a private home to rent at \$15 a night.

The Hannons live in Conde, a town of 200 about 40 miles from Aberdeen. Since they've been here, friends feeding their cat discovered frozen pipes in their home. A flurry of phone calls helped get them fixed.

After Harvey fell, the Hannons traveled by ambulance from Canistota to the emergency room at Sioux Valley, the same hospital where he underwent heart surgery about four years ago. Donna stayed in a private home then as well.

"We get along great together," Donna says of her current host. "She drives me to the hospital in the mornings, and hospital security takes me to her place at night. I had to start recycling clothing, and she said, 'I'm doing laundry oxygen or where clots developed. today. Just leave yours on a pile at the foot of your bed.'

but Harvey and I are sure thankful she decided to."

'We will fax updates'

services to make the time here from hospital time.

Social workers give counsel on and School even keeps an apartment available for families.

At McKennan, Dickes led the charge for Hometown Connections, a copyrighted program that's hydrops often are given a 10 to 20

"It can be a scary thing to leave radius make up 52 to 54 percent of ure of 40 percent. the security of their hometown McKennan's inpatient care in any

Patients' medical charts are flagged with a sticker that bears with big brother Joey, 5, at his the name of their hometown grandparents' house. Donna and Harvey Hannon physician, referring physician and farmer, broke his femur about care. Dickes says Hometown Conthree inches below the ball joint. nections helps medical profes- in Sioux Falls at first, but Kubal

"As often as daily, we will fax town physician," Dickes says. "Of course, that's up to the patient, but They also didn't have a place for less than 1 percent choose not to

'Our miracle baby'

Falls doctors might not have been able to save a decade ago.

When he was born 12 weeks premature at Avera Sacred Heart in Yankton, his body was inexplicably large for a pregnancy with no complications. A condition called nonimmune hydrops, believed to be caused by a virus in Mathias' case, was to blame. It made his trunk retain fluid and swell.

After being delivered by emergency Caesarean section at 26 cating areas that went without

pregnant again after our son, Joey, passes to go swim at the Wellness for our younger children and for "Not too many people would and lo and behold, here he is," Center," says Dani Pape of Sioux our whole family," Staci Zwaan take strangers into their homes, says Teresa Kubal of Tyndall. Valley. "We want to help them says. "But it's so extremely long sanders@argusleader.com or 575-3629 "We started calling Mathias our understand the illness and play miracle baby as soon as we found out their feelings." out, and after all we've been through since, we definitely know All Sioux Falls hospitals offer he's a miracle."

easier for out-of-town families. band have been neighbors to Von enables doctors to work, compas-Social workers at Sioux Valley, Hagel and Steele at the Ronald sion can speed recovery. McKennan and the Veterans McDonald House. When Mathias Affairs Regional Medical Center first arrived in Sioux Falls, only his larger than that is an attitude that help families find places to stay father was with him. Too weak to every child deserves all the care, and eat and things to do for respite travel after labor, Kubal didn't see her baby for four days.

"He had seven tubes coming finances. They arrange activities out of him, with the ventilator and sofas. Children's Care Hospital of her first meeting with Mathias. generation. It can be exhausting. "There were very few little spaces on his body where we could even touch him."

Babies born with non-immune now hospitalwide policy. Patients percent chance of survival. Math-

from beyond Sioux Falls' 25-mile ias was given the unpromising fig-

rified Mathias wouldn't be there geon, a speech therapist and a when they returned from visits pediatric dentist in the same place

Bills went unpaid, and without communicate effectively: "When I arrived here Feb. 8 after Harvey Sioux Falls physician. Once the Kubal's income, her husband slipped in an icy parking lot in patient is released, his or her own withdrew from an information Canistota. Harvey, a retired doctors will help with follow-up technology program in Yankton.

The couple stayed with friends "We came down in the ambu-sionals in both cities stay involved. says the strain was telling.

"Even friends don't know what Regional Medical Center, staff them to see him."

Seven weeks after his birth, to be treated with the maximum Mathias still is five weeks early. amount of respect and compas-Though he's breathing on his sion," says director Porzio. own, his liver and kidneys aren't Teresa and Roger Kubal's son, jaundiced. Neurological tests indify for benefits beyond the medical says. "It'd be worth it." Mathias, is a baby whom Sioux cate he likely will have difficulty scope. While 100 miles is a good with motor skills and cognizant yardstick, Porzio says not all famabilities. He's also at risk for cere- ilies are eligible, and exceptions bral palsy, but Kubal repeats her husband's phrase: "We'd rather have this than the alternative."

'We want to help'

Hospital social services in Sioux Falls attempt to include the patient's immediate family. Parents, siblings and grandparents are key in the healing process.

Life away from home for brothweeks, Mathias weighed 10 ers and sisters is especially upsetpounds, 14 ounces. His body was ting because issues of jealousy bruised, his lungs nearly col- and abandonment can arise. Child small dark spots on his brain, indi- design activities to teach siblings and allow them to let off steam.

"We'll get them involved in when Zach had a transplant.

Larry Fenton, chair of the University of South Dakota Medical School's pediatrics department, For weeks, she and her hus- says that while technology "Expertise is important, but

love, warmth and attention we can give to help them," Fenton says.

He points to grandparents as another crucial part of the puzzle. for siblings, if needed. They monitors on his hands and feet They often resume the role of prisecure fold-out beds in chairs or and an IV in his head," Kubal says mary caregiver, this time for a new

"They're watching their child and their grandchild go through a very difficult time," Fenton says.

The model in the pediatrics department is seen at South Dakota Children's, on the Sioux Valley

for the child who has to suffer."

Zach underwent two open-heart surgeries at the University of Michigan Congenital Heart Center, inside the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor. He nearly died.

"It was 30 hours of surgery, and he got very sick, neurologically, waiting for his heart transplant, Zwaan says.

In the nearly nine years since, Zach's been treated at both Sioux Falls hospitals, first at Sioux Valley for his heart condition and most recently at McKennan's Cancer Institute for a kidney-cell biop-

The couple's two younger children, 7-year-old Mackenzi and 3year-old Chazni, have known nothing else, Zwaan says. Still, the girls wonder why their parents spend so much time with Zach.

"Monte said, 'Pretend it's you and you're sick and you had to be in the hospital," Zwaan says. "He asked, 'Wouldn't you want Mom or Dad there with you? Even though Zach doesn't think like you do, he knows we're there and we're protecting him.' "

The illness has been a struggle. "The hardest thing was a little over a year ago, when we decided to move him into a nearby group home with two other disabled young men," she says. "Someone is with them 24 hours a day. But we worried that the community, which has been so wonderful to us, would think we were bad parents."

'It'd be worth it'

Most out-of-town families are able to balance life in Sioux Falls with life at home just as long as they need to. When that happens, the sleepless nights and stress are nearly forgotten.

Renea and Kyle Adelman of Milbank have been the couple driving between here and there, comforting older children and working their jobs when possible. Thursday, nearly five weeks after their triplets were born, they got their happy ending.

The couple's two older children, 11-year-old Seth and 9-year-old Shelby, oohed and aahed at the tiny babies during visits: two girls, Jordan and Jaden, and between them, brother Jackson.

"Money still is a big concern," Renea says. "We liked to stay close to the hospital, but between driving down and buying meals, it got very expensive. I knew I'd better work while I could because there wouldn't be much time after the triplets came home."

Because her husband works The Kubals lived day to day, ter- tal puts a geneticist, a plastic sur- nights, drilling granite, Adelman will be the parent to put the triplets to bed and to answer their cries in the dark.

> "Everyone says they'll help, but Fenton says it allows the team to we'll see what happens when I call

walk into a room and see all of at 2 in the morning." those doctors with their heads Von Hagel and Steele, Majessa's parents, pray they'll get that far. bent together over one little kid's chart, I think, 'Yes! This is what

Weekend visits bring Von Hagel's 21/2-year-old daughter, East of Fenton's office, at the VA Jacinda, who stays with grandparents. Talk often veers to expenses and how they'll pay them. Von Hagel worked as a Certified Nurse Assistant but recently switched jobs and didn't qualify for health benefits. Steele is unemployed.

"We're on Medicaid, but I don't Veterans and their families who care if I had to work my whole life functioning properly, and he's travel long distances might quali- to pay these bills," Von Hagel The couple plans to move from

Sioux City to Sioux Falls within the coming weeks. Doctors have told them Majessa likely will need to stay at the hospital for another "Of the 18,000 veterans we treat a year, about 800 are eligible for six months. By that time, the couple hopes to be settled in a new home, and Steele in a new job.

Until then, they hover over Staci and Monte Zwaan's first Majessa. Evidence of the life link child, 12-year-old Zach, has bat- between Von Hagel and her tled heart problems since birth. A daughter is gone. An inch-long "blue baby," Zach had multiple scar closes the skin over Majesholes in his heart, and at age 4, he sa's taut tummy, where her belly received a transplant. Since then, button should be. They point to her feet, the miniature toes so like Minn., have been in and out of her mother's. They watch her as lapsed. An MRI would reveal four life coordinators at both hospitals hospitals with their son. They she sleeps, awed each time her chest rises and falls.

"Hey, sugar," Steele whispers, brushing a finger across Majes-"We thought we couldn't get playroom activities or get them "It's been a long road for us and sa's cheek. "Hey, sugar, wake up." Her eyes open.

Reach reporter Jennifer Sanderson at



A nurse gives Majessa, daughter of Shanon Steele and Tiffanie Von Hagel, medication while she sleeps in Sloux Valley Neonatal Intensive Care.