



The home of Kori and Tim Skaggs was destroyed after a kitchen fire got out of control on Friday night. Tim Skaggs and his two children were in the home at the time of the fire but were able to get out before the home was fully engulfed.

Family loses home in fire before Christmas

The home of Kori and Timothy Skaggs was a total loss on Friday night, just two nights before Christmas. The Adair County Fire Department responded to the scene on 910 Sulphur Creek Road at 9:16 p.m.

Fifteen firemen were on the scene for two and a half hours. Donations to the family can be made through the Adair County Salvation Army or dropped off at the Adair County 911 Dispatch Center, where Kori Skaggs is an employee. Donations can be dropped off in the

lobby. Monetary donations can be put in a mailbox on the outside of the building. Put any funds in an envelope and label it with Skaggs' name on the front. For questions, call Toni Humphress at 634-6485.

Arson suspected in house fire in Breeding

An unoccupied home suffered major internal damage on Friday after a fire erupted in the middle of the home. Arson is suspected according to Breeding Area Volunteer Fire Department fire chief Terry Harvey. Harvey said a fire accelerant appeared to have been poured throughout the middle of the home. Firefighters had to work from the inside to control the fire. According to new policy, Adair County EMS were on standby before the firemen went into the home. The home is located 13 miles outside of Columbia in the Breeding community. The Adair County Sheriff's Department, Kentucky State Police Arson Unit and Adair County Search and Rescue were also on the scene. No arrests have been made at this time in connection to the fire.



The Breeding Area Volunteer Fire Department were on the scene of a fire for two and a half hours on Friday.

UNSUNG HEROES

Community members honored for hard work, kindness

Readers were recently asked to share with us some well-kept secrets in the community. We wanted to know about the people who work behind the scenes giving to individuals, the community or an organization. We heard from several of you about people who have touched your lives personally or about neighbors who are always helping others. We take this opportunity to recognize some of those people who work tirelessly to help others without expecting recognition. They give from the kindness of their heart. Because of the support of our readers who responded, we proudly present to you our 2011 Unsung Hero award winners. See their stories on page 3.



Above, Debbie Dunn helps sort through Angel Tree donations. Dunn is a recipient of the Unsung Hero award along with Debbie Cowan, Paula Garrison, Angie Smith, Jaime White and Stacey Wilson.

EDITORIAL

Hospital board should resign

This month, the hospital district board and the county government forged an agreement in the tune of \$1.7 million to help the hospital stay afloat and move forward. The hospital needs funds to install a technology system that will integrate medical records with providers across the nation. They also expect \$800,000 of the loan to be used for cash flow. The money is expected to be paid back when the hospital is reimbursed by the federal government for implementing the technology system. Asking the county government for help was a choice of last resort. The hospital is in such poor financial shape it can no longer borrow funds on its own. Magistrates and the county judge were in a no-win situation. They were being asked to leverage a collapsing hospital with your tax dollars. If they said no, it could mean the closure of a local hospital we all hold dear. The fiscal court agreed to borrow the funds for the hospital and asked two things: first, they wanted to know that the hospital administration will try just as hard to keep the hospital independent as they will to sell it. Second, they wanted a say in any final decision to sell the hospital. It seems like little to ask of someone who is \$13 million in debt and asking you for \$1.7 million. Yet it was obvious during a special called hospital board meeting last Wednesday that at least some board members did not like the fiscal court's insistence that they share decision-making power. County Judge Executive Ann Melton told board members she heard two and a half years ago that something was wrong from agents who were securing bonds for the hospital. She said she warned board members then. "If you all had listened to me two and a half years ago," she told them Wednesday night. Board treasurer Russell Guy Perkins responded that Melton was correct. "We were a rubber stamp," he said. We appreciate Mr. Perkins for being so candid. It saves us the trouble of trying to prove that board members acted irresponsibly in overseeing the hospital's business. Now the question has to be, "Why are they still on the board?" The same board that ran the hospital into the ground is borrowing \$1.7 million that taxpayers will be responsible for (on top of the \$13 million existing debt we get to claim if the hospital fails) and they are deciding the future of the hospital. That's not the most ridiculous part, however. They are also in control of a document that will show if any criminal activity took place. A forensic audit that should show how hospital funds were handled has not been made public and at this point we wonder if the board ever intends to let taxpayers see it. It was projected to be completed in October. The people of this community need to know that board members are making decisions based on what is best for this community. They cannot have that assurance as long as board members have a personal stake in any damaging evidence that may come out. Simply put, board members should resign. Only Josh Harden has been on the board for less than two years. Bradley Irvin has served one term and has said he does not want to be reappointed; he is staying on until an appointment is made in January. Chairman Jim Evans and members John Nall and Perkins have been on the board long enough that they will be scrutinized in any investigation. They may be completely innocent but it is absurd for them to be part of any decision-making to determine how a forensic audit is handled. We should not leave the future of our hospital in the hands of the same people who brought it to the brink of destruction. There are millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs at stake, not to mention the need for an unbiased investigation into how we got where we are. Board members need to step aside. We need to move forward with a board that doesn't have baggage from the past, a board that will instill confidence as it makes the difficult decisions that lie ahead. By Sharon Burton snburton@duo-county.com

RELATED ARTICLES

Hospital board meetingPage 2
When editorials move to the front pagePage 4