

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

With the start of a new year, the Perkins County Senior Center faces an old dilemma.

The center is in financial difficulty which means there are several of the community's elderly as well as staff who might not have a place to congregate daily if things don't turn around.

The board of directors and staff continue to be resourceful in their efforts to raise funds for expenses, however, the financial reports for 2009 showed a loss of \$19,400 which creates a questionable future for the center and those who enjoy its amenities.

The center's resources are being exhausted, according to a letter that was sent to residents of Perkins County last fall. It's projected that the center will be closed in three years if it continues to operate at its current level.

The letter distributed asks for donations to the non-profit organization. Depending on the amount of funds contributed, the donor will receive dollar-off coupons, free meals, or free rental of the spacious facility for social gatherings.

The fear of the board, staff, volunteers and those who depend on the senior center for their dose of daily social activity are concerned that the lack of funds will force its closure.

The purpose of the letter is seeking "friends of the center" who will contribute a tax deductible financial gift toward its future.

Because the population of the elderly has changed, along with other factors, the attendance at the county's four senior sites (Grant-Venango-Madrid-Elsie) has decreased from a combined 100 persons a day to less than half that number.

Needless to say, the per-meal profit of \$1 does not go far in paying monthly expenses such as personnel, utilities and supplies.

Over the past 30 years, since the Perkins County Senior Center began in 1980, countless individuals have enjoyed the meals, entertainment and activities shared with others in a social setting. Fellowship and nutrition are a large part of meeting the needs of people over the age of 60 as a result of funding from the Older Americans Act which was passed by Congress to address the needs of this age group.

Besides a small source of income from fundraisers such as an annual potato bar, pancake supper and burrito night, the Thrift Shoppe generates \$24,000 annually—still not enough to keep the facility alive.

The Thrift Shoppe opened in 1987 to generate funds to help with expenses and continues to be staffed by volunteer help.

For more information or to become a "friend of the center" by contributing to their quest to keep the county's senior facilities operational, contact Director Karen Glunz or Assistant Director Anita Hutcheson at 308-352-4236.