

ier more recently, since Osborne County Memorial and 15 other hospitals in the region pooled their resources to find and share a headhunter.

Earlier this year, the Sunflower Health Network in Salina hired a full-time recruiter for its members. Participating hospitals pay a monthly fee of \$125 to seek a midlevel practitioner, and \$250 for doctors, along with a \$10,000 to \$15,000 placement fee if a match is found.

Sunflower's members already had been collaborating — on everything from joint purchasing to group health insurance — since the mid-1990s, when the network was formed, and it made sense to add recruiting to the mix, says Heather Fuller, Sunflower's executive director. Members even share a radiologist to help fill in when one goes on vacation.

"It's so expensive, just like anything else, for the critical access hospitals that don't have a lot of money," Fuller says. "They were being charged huge amounts from outside agencies and recruitment firms to get these doctors. So they thought, 'Why can't we work together on this, as we have on some of our other ventures and programs in the past?'"

The physician recruiter, Jill Mick, a native of Kansas, has ties to the community and nearby universities, and she is stationed in the Jayhawk state, rather than a big city in another part of the country. Since February, Mick has placed six doctors at member hospitals, most of whom came from nearby schools. Recruiting in the area has been key, she says, because candidates are familiar with the small towns.

Memorial Health System in Abilene once paid a recruiter for more than a year and a half to find a general surgeon, with no success, says CEO Mark Miller. Thanks to the Sunflower network, the hospital is close to signing up two physicians, after a short search, and is searching for a third.

Over at Osborne, with the help of Sunflower's program, the hospital has hired two doctors and a physician assistant. Even though Sunflower's members are competing for the same docs, they've remained professional about it, and participants know that winning the candidate is about making the best pitch.

Floyd thinks rurals everywhere need to find partners if they want to continue thriving. "Nobody can fly by themselves anymore. You cannot do it without help from your friends in this business," she says. — MARTY STEMPIAK ●

Photographs by Phoenix Decorating Co.

PHOTOOP



Nurses on Parade

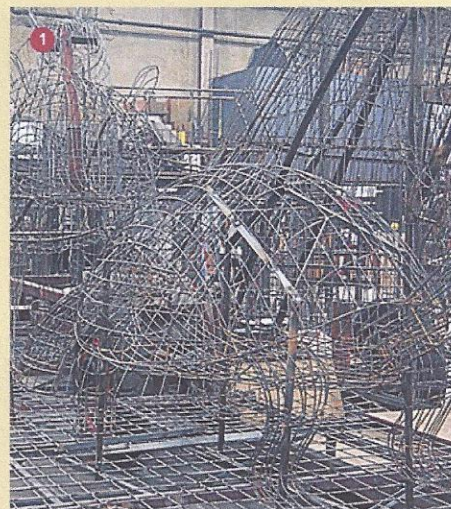
Roses are red, violets are blue, and at this year's Rose Parade, nurses will get their due. On Jan. 1, more than 40 floats, 20 marching bands and 20 equestrian units will wind their way through Pasadena, Calif., on the way to the Rose Bowl in celebration of the granddaddy of them all, the 99th Rose Bowl football game. Mixed in among dazzling displays of flowers rolling down Colorado Boulevard will be a new entrant titled "A Healing Place." It pays tribute to the nation's nurses.

For the first time in its 124-year history, a nurse is serving as president of the Tournament of Roses. Sally Bixby, R.N., spent 38 years as an operating room nurse before retiring recently.

In 2007, when it was known that Bixby would be president for the 2013 parade, a group of five fellow nurses came up with the idea to fund a float honoring the nursing profession. They formed a nonprofit, Bare Root, and raised more than \$300,000, including donations from several California hospitals.

With the float more than paid for, Paul Wafer, R.N., who serves as the group's vice president of marketing, says there are plans to fund a nursing scholarship. Details have yet to be worked out.

"This is a great honor," Bixby says. "Nurses are proud of what they do, but sometimes we aren't very good at telling our story." — MATTHEW WEINSTOCK ●



IT'S ALIVE! 1. Wire frames are welded together to form the basic shapes of the animals. 2. Mesh is applied to the wire frames to create a more exacting contour. 3. All painted, just waiting for the fresh flowers.

