

## Twin Falls Times News, Thursday, March 4, 2010 -- by Andrea Jackson

### **St. Luke's seeks reversal of Cassia Co. decision**

St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center in Twin Falls is seeking court reversal of a decision by Cassia County commissioners that the public shouldn't pay a hospital bill for a needy resident, court records show.

The bill is for about \$13,439. According to Cassia County court records, St. Luke's claims it covers a week of in-patient psychiatric treatment, care and medication given to an indigent resident who admitted herself to St. Luke's Canyon View Behavioral Health Services in 2008.

The county claims the public is not responsible for this bill because the now 21-year-old patient got treatment from Canyon View that was medically unnecessary, court records show.

"After hearing the facts presented, the commissioners determined that the services rendered were not medically necessary and (the indigent person) could have been treated as an out patient," according to a filing from the county.

The patient was allegedly seeking treatment for depression and post-traumatic stress disorders in late 2008. She claimed to have had suicidal thoughts, but according to the county "her only attempt was trying to go to sleep in a bathtub full of water."

According to the county, "The services rendered were not a result of sudden, serious and unexpected symptoms of illness or injury sufficiently severe to require seven (7) days of inpatient care."

The hospital in court records contends the patient was treated appropriately, and aside from the medical bill it also wants to county to pay for its costs and attorney fees. "There is no evidence that the services were not provided on an emergency basis," according to a filing from the hospital.

In 2004, Canyon View terminated a contract it had with Cassia County, according to a letter filed in court from Cassia County Prosecutor Alfred Barrus. "When that contract was cancelled and the cost to have someone held at your facility escalated so high, Cassia County felt that they had to take some action to try and set up a more feasible mental health system in the county."

In this letter, the county told Canyon View that it contracted with a clinical psychologist to handle the county's designated examiner services as well as screenings for voluntary and involuntary commitments in cases in which the county might be held financially responsible.

A hearing in the case is set for Monday in Burley.