

Oberlin finishes new addition for docs

By Kimberly Davis

The Oberlin Herald
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With a new addition done, Decatur County Hospital has a place for patients to see visiting specialists in private, rather than meeting with them out in the hall as sometimes happened in the past.

The hospital in Oberlin is run by a board appointed by the Decatur County commissioners, with the building owned by the county.

The critical access hospital, said Administrator Lynn Doeden, has 24 beds, some in private rooms with one bed and some in semi-private rooms with two.

The critical access designation means the hospital receives better reimbursement from Medicare, she said, and with an aging population, that makes a difference.

Over the last year, construction was finished on the speciality

clinic addition on the east side of the building. The clinic is set up with a lobby, two exam rooms, procedure room, stress test room, consultation room, a restroom, two storage areas and two offices.

The clinic hosts doctors specializing in heart and cancer treatment, surgery and urology, or urinary tract problems.

The hospital is also working on getting a podiatrist here.

In 2002, Decatur Health Systems, a nonprofit corporation set up by the hospital board with five members and one commissioner, took over management of the Decatur County Hospital.

Over the years, the corporation has established itself as a strong and profitable operator.

The hospital made money in 1994, 1996, 1999 and ever since then, with losses in 1997 and 1998.

That included last year, where the hospital made \$51,000, although that was down from the year before. In 2006, the hospital made \$212,000.


In 2007, said Mrs. Doeden, the hospital just didn't have as many patients. Admissions for acute, swing bed and observation care totaled 783 patients. In 2006, she said, the hospital had 961.

There really isn't any explanation why the hospital had 178 fewer patients, she said. The hospital does have one less doctor, she said, but that only accounts for a few of the patients.

Forty-six percent of the budget, said Mrs. Doeden, goes for operational expenses, with the biggest part of that

going to wages. The hospital provides health insurance, paying for two-thirds of a full time employee's policy and one-third of a part-time employee's cost, a matching 401K pension plan, life insurance and short-term disability coverage.

The county decided to build the hospital in 1949, 58 years ago, said Mrs. Doeden. When the facility opened in 1952, it was managed by Lutheran Hospitals and Health Systems, which merged into Banner Health Systems in 2000. In 2002, Banner walked away from its smaller



Decatur Health Systems

- Beds 24 as critical access hospital, 38 long-term nursing care.
- Revenue 2007 \$6,249,720 with \$2,205,053 in expenses.
- Profit 2007 \$51,255 including \$6,588 in interest paid for savings account.
- County money \$194,000 from 5.786 mill property tax levy.
- Doctors Two physicians, one nurse practitioner.
- Phone (785) 475-2208.

See OBERLIN, Page 20



THINGS WERE HOPPING at the nurses station at the Oberlin Clinic with Sue Black (left) on the phone, Jennie Anderson working on the computer and Melanie Scott on the phone too.

— Photo by Kimberly Davis/ The Oberlin Herald



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Oberlin finishes expansion for visiting specialists

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rural hospitals in the Midwest.

In 2007, said Mrs. Doeden the hospital had to write-off around \$3,200,000 for insurance companies. That left a revenue of \$6,249,720 and expenses were \$6,205,053.

The hospital has two doctors, one nurse practitioner, 23 registered nurses, four licensed practical nurses and 27 certified nurse aides. It shares a lab with the clinic, although the clinic has its own lab as well.

Attached to the back side of the hospital is Cedar Living Center, a licensed 38-bed long-term care facility. Decatur Health Systems also runs Cottonwood Home Health Care.

In 2004, the hospital took over management of Wheat Ridge Terrace Apartments, a 12-unit independent living facility in Oberlin.

Inside the hospital, near the speciality clinic, is the 24-hour emergency room.

The hospital has two doctors and one nurse practitioner, all shared with the clinic. The total staff of 111 people includes people at the hospital, Cottonwood and Cedar Living, Mrs. Doden said.

Despite having fewer patients last year and the decrease in reimbursements from insurance providers, especially Medicaid and Medicare, she said, it's important for a town to have a hospital. Medicare, which serves people over 65 and others on Social Security, is the No. 1 plan used by patients here, she said. Reimbursements are down partly because of changes from the federal government.

A town, said Mrs. Doeden, needs a hospital to survive. Oberlin and Decatur County have an aging population and it's important for people not to have to travel to get health care.

Besides that, said she said, the hospital provides a living to 111 families. If the hospital wasn't here, she said, some of those people would be forced to move.

Besides insurance reimbursement and payments from individuals, the hospital receives

money from the county through taxes. The hospital should get \$194,000 from the county this year, she said, split into two payments.

The money from the county, said Mrs. Doeden, isn't used for operations. It goes to the hospital board and is used for maintenance on the building and new equipment.

In the past few years, the board has used the money to buy a scanning machine and a new digitizer which helps the staff read X-rays quicker.

When things break down, said Mrs. Doeden, the board uses the money from the county to make repairs.

Over the last 10 years, she said, the tax levy hasn't changed, but property valuation has gone up, meaning more money comes in.

The rules for health care changes all the time, said Mrs. Doeden, especially with new regulations from the government. There have been big changes in home care and reimbursements recently, she said, and the hospital is trying to comply. In December, Dr. Richard May left, which means the doctor procurement committee is looking for a replacement.

Mrs. Doeden said they have a candidate who is coming from Wichita to check out of the facility. All of the doctors actually work through the clinic, but have privileges at the hospital, she said.

With Dr. May gone, the hospital has put obstetrics on hold. Although the two doctors can deliver babies at the hospital, there isn't anyone qualified to do surgery if a cesarian section would be needed.


Mrs. Doeden said they have to have a doctor within 30 minutes who can perform surgery.

In 2007, she said, the hospital staff delivered 19 babies. The birth numbers have decreased over the years, said Mrs. Doeden, but that is mainly due to the older population in the county.

The doctor procurement committee is looking for a family practice doctor who is also able to do this kind of surgery, she said.



AT THE NURSE'S STATION Linda Stanley worked on a paperwork during her shift at the Decatur County Hospital. — Photo by Kimberly Davis/The Oberlin Herald



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Oberlin offers wide array of other services

Decatur County has a wide array of health care available, including dentistry, chiropractic care, optometry, the Medical Arts Clinic and the public health department.

The county health department, west of the hospital and clinic, is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday, although it's closed for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Marilyn Gamblin, health administrator, said the department offers family planning, immunizations, the Women, Infant and Children program, foot care, an annual health fair and child care licensing inspections for day-care centers.

Part of the money to run the department, said Ms. Gamblin, comes from county tax dollars, part from both state and federal grants, but most comes from fees for services.

The department, she said, does a lot of behind-the-scenes work that no one sees. Anyone can use the department's services, she added; it isn't just for low income people.

The department is an important part of health care, she said, because it helps assure that people have the access to the services they need. The department ensures people have family planning and immunizations, she said, and monitors the health and wellness of people here, including monitoring water and doing infectious disease investigation.

Next door to the east, is the Oberlin Medical Arts Clinic. The clinic is open from 8:30 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, said Administrator Barb Whitney, and Saturdays from Labor Day through Memorial Day from 9 a.m. to noon.

The clinic has two doctors, a nurse practitioner and two full-time registered nurses, one licensed practical nurse and one medical assistant.

She said the doctors do microderm abrasion, minor surgery, close up cuts and do botox treatments. The clinic offers a full lab and other family care, minus obstetrics. Mrs. Whitney said the clinic will start offering obstetrics again after they hire another doctor.

Mrs. Whitney said the biggest changes in the last year the departure of long-time physician Dr. Richard May for Lawrence and the retirement of Administrator Larry Ganje. Mrs. Whitney said she is new to the role of administrator, although

she formerly worked there as a nurse.

The clinic accepts a full range of health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare, she said.

At 106 S. Rodehaver is Fredrickson Dental, offering full family dental care for the past 25 years. The office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursdays, said Dr. Gary Fredrickson.

He offers general dental care for families, including fillings, crowns, partials, dentures and cosmetic whitening of teeth using the Zoom system. Two orthodontists use the office for visits. Robyn Rouse, a dental hygienist, works two days a week.

Dr. Fredrickson said he encourages parents to bring children in for their first check ups at age 3.

After that, he said, they should come in at least once a year. The main reason adults lose teeth, said Dr. Fredrickson, is periodontal disease, infections under the gums. Adults need to come in once a year, even if they don't have cavities, to have their teeth cleaned, which can help prevent this.

The office staff processes all insurance, Dr. Fredrickson said, and is a provider for Delta Dental and Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

The health of a person's mouth, he said, actually affects the whole body. Having a healthy mouth and teeth can help stabilize other underlying medical conditions.

At 105 S. Penn Avenue is Lifetime Eyecare, open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Dr. Dirk Gray and Dr. Robert Stamm see patients in Oberlin on Wednesdays.

The office is a branch of Lifetime Eyecare Specialist of McCook. The office in McCook is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday and from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday.

The firm offers visual screenings, comanagement for macular degeneration, cataracts, follow ups for other surgeries, adjust glasses, dispense glasses, contacts and other eye-care needs.

People should have their eyes checked every other year if they are 60 or younger, said Christina Propes, optician. After that, they should have them checked every year or if they

have diabetes, at any age their eyes should be checked.

Up the street at 504 N. Penn Ave. is Fair Chiropractic and Wellness Clinic with three doctors, Dr. Douglas Fair, Dr. Ryan Unger and Dr. Shannon Addleman.

Dr. Fair, who has a master's degree in nutrition and certification in acupuncture, has been in practice since 1964, owning the clinic in Oberlin since 1986.

He specializes in applied kinesiology and Chiro plus kinesiology, and recently received training in neurofeedback, a type of biofeedback using an electroencephalograph to measure brain waves.

Dr. Fair sees patients four days a week, said his wife, Sandy Fair, who still oversees some of the business management, but he has started taking more time off with the addition of two associates.

Dr. Unger joined the team in 2000 after graduating from Palmer College of Chiropractic. A native of Oberlin, he is the son of Ralph and Norma Unger.

Dr. Unger sees patients from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and one Saturday a month. He also has a clinic in St. Francis, which he and his wife Darci manage.

Dr. Unger has become a certified Brimhall Wellness Practitioner offering holistic specialties, including low-level laser, allergy elimination techniques and energy balancing detoxifica-

tion. He attended training in California with Dr. Fair on neurofeedback for various symptoms, including migraines, sleep disorders, hyperactivity and fibromyalgia.

Dr. Addleman, said Mrs. Fair, joined the clinic last May. She worked as a relief practitioner the previous summer for Dr. Fair while visiting her parents, Rusty and Sharon Addleman, owners of Addleman Drug Store.

Dr. Addleman graduated from the National College of Chiropractic and worked with chiropractors in Colorado and Chicago. She offers the Thompson Technique with a special type of adjusting table that utilizes flexion and traction and enjoys working with sports injuries. Women, said Mrs. Fair, like having a female doctor. Dr. Addleman sees patients everyday except Tuesday and works one Saturday a month.

In addition to the three doctors, said Mrs. Fair, people will find a trained professional staff. Kelly Wasson, the office manager, has been with the clinic several years. Christie Morris is a chiropractic assistant.

"We were sad to recently lose a valuable employee, Angie Fortin, who has decided to pursue a career in chiropractic," said Dr. Fair. "She was recently hired by a chiropractor in Wichita, while she pursues her education."

At 108 E. Ash is the Good Samaritan Center, a 48 bed long-term care home. Administrator Jan-

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IN THE LAB Jeannie Gawith, nurse at the Oberlin Clinic, worked on some tests. The clinic offers a full lab. — Photo by Kimberly Davis/The Oberlin Herald

Oberlin offers wide array of other medical services

OBERLIN SERVICES, from Page 21

ice Shobe said the center is full and has a waiting list. The center celebrated 50 years of service last year and employs around 70 people.

The building is owned by the county and leased to the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society.

Mrs. Shobe said residents receive 24-hour care from licensed nurses, all their meals and housekeeping. Activities are offered both in and outside the facility, which also offers physical, occupational and speech therapy in house.

The center offers adult day care and respite care to nonresidents, she said.

Last year, said Mrs. Shobe, the center opened the Garden of Hope, a day room for alzheimers patients. There the staff covers more small-group and one-on-one interaction, which give a more relaxed and less stimulating environment for activities and meal times, she said.

"We are also excited about our grow-our-own program," said Mrs. Shobe.

The program allows people to get started as nurse aides and then the center helps them become a licensed practical or registered nurse. Mrs. Shobe said the center sponsors the students through a state Board of Regents scholarship program and the county health foundation.

After training, she said, students can come back to the center and work off their loans.

Kelly's Home Medical opened this year in Oberlin, providing a service for people to get home health care items. Owner Kelly Moore, who has been a registered nurse for over 25 years, started the business on Main Street in the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center. She offers home oxygen, breathing machines and supplies, walkers, mobility aids, scooters, power wheel chairs and lift chair recliners.

Mrs. Moore said she decided to open the business because there wasn't another one in town like it. She accepts Medicare, Medicaid and other insurances.

Although she doesn't hold regular office hours, people can contact Mrs. Moore at (785) 470-1695 or 475-3722.

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Norton hospital committed to best care

By Carolyn Plotts

The Norton Telegram
cplotts@nwkansas.com

The Norton County Hospital is committed to providing its patients with the best care possible, says Administrator Rich Miller, and a small-scale renovation of the hospital's lower level began in April.

The project includes relocating physical therapy, cardiac rehabilitation and the main conference/board room. Telemedicine will be relocated to the lower level as well.

Because physical therapy and cardiac rehabilitation have shown an increase in use, both will have more area, Miller said. Physical therapy will have private therapy areas. The mechanical systems will also be updated in the lower level. The project, he said, is estimated to cost about \$500,000.

Mr. Miller said the hospital is continuing its search for a fourth doctor. He said they are staying very positive about the situation.

"We want to make sure it's right fit for the community," he said, "and also for the hospital and its staff."

Meanwhile, the hospital has on staff Patricia McCartney, an advanced registered nurse practitioner, and Kristen Vogel and Julie Siefers, physician assistants. The hospital also uses Docs Who Care, a temporary staffing agency which has provided doctors to hospitals across the state.

"Our greatest need right now is doctor recruitment," he said. "We're looking for a family practice doctor who has OB (obstetrics) experience to join our doctors and three midlevels."

County offers first-class services

By Carolyn Plotts

The Norton Telegram
cplotts@nwkansas.com

Norton County offers its residents first-class medical services in the form of a remodeled hospital, a clinic and visiting specialists.

The town has two chiropractors, massage therapists, two pharmacies, a nursing home, a senior-citizen apartment building, a retirement/assisted living center, three dentists, the county health department, an eye doctor, an



- Beds 25 as Critical Access Hospital.
- Revenue 2007 \$10,277,288
- Profit 2007 \$560,783
- County money 2007 \$101,863
- Doctors Three physicians, one nurse practitioner, two physician assistants.
- Phone (785) 877-3351

The three doctors are Glenda Maurer, M.D., family practice and obstetrics; Ruben Silan, M.D., family practice and surgery; and Jeff McKinley, D.O., family practice and obstetrics.

Mr. Miller said the hospital has been continuing to add modules to its computer program, the Dairyland Information System, which is helping the hospital get rid of paper records. He said they have installed a wireless network to implement the Clinical Documentation module. Nurses will be able to chart directly onto a computer from the patient rooms.

"Our goal is to have a totally electronic records system," Mr. Miller said.

Norton County Hospital has around 125 employees. In 2006, the hospital named Julie Campbell, who had worked there 10 years, as director of nurses. They brought in Ryan Stover

ambulance service, a senior citizen center, a mental health clinic and a drug-and-alcohol treatment center.

Norton County Hospital

Norton County Hospital is a 25-bed critical access hospital with services that include obstetrics, laboratory, X-ray, surgical, emergency room, in-patient and out-patient care, respiratory therapy, chemotherapy, cardiac rehabilita-

as the chief financial officer and Jan Long as the clinic manager.

"We've been very pleased with all three," the administrator said. "They have all stepped up and done a great job. We're very proud of them and all of the staff, for that matter. Our staff here know what they are doing and are good at it and that is a great asset."

The hospital offers obstetrics (delivery of babies); an emergency room; laboratory; X-ray; surgical; acute, skilled and intermediate in-patient care; outpatient observation; respiratory therapy; chemotherapy administration; a Meals-On-Wheels program; diabetic instruction; cardiopulmonary resuscitation training; the Doctors Clinic; and visiting specialists.

Mr. Miller said they are working on getting a specialty clinic in pulmonary (lung and breathing) medicine and at expanding the orthopedic clinic.

Norton County Hospital closed its 2007 fiscal year in the black, he said.

"We had a good year financially," he said. "Part of that is because of the disproportionate share payment."

The hospital gets the payment because it meets criteria set by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Payments, including having low-risk obstetrics services and some uninsured in the population.

The hospital, he said, had a total net income of \$560,783 in 2007. The hospital had total patient revenue of \$10,277,288; other revenue of \$87,310; and non-operating revenue of \$273,009, of which \$101,863, or two mills, was from the county property tax. Total expenses were \$8,205,651 and contractual adjustments, charity care and bad debt allowances were \$1,982,240.

For the current fiscal year, he said the hospital is showing a profit. For the nine months period ending in March, the hospital showed patient revenue at \$8,143,792; other operating revenue at \$135,898; and non-operating revenue at \$408,721.


The hospital has had \$2,060,176 in contractual adjustments, charity care and bad debt allowances, and \$6,406,037 in operating expenses for a net gain of \$222,198.

Both revenues and expenses are slightly higher than budgeted for the nine months, Mr. Miller said.

"It's been a good year for the nine-month period," he said.

"The community has been very supportive. We're on schedule to deliver 45 to 50 babies this year, and the number of surgeries and surgical procedures has increased."

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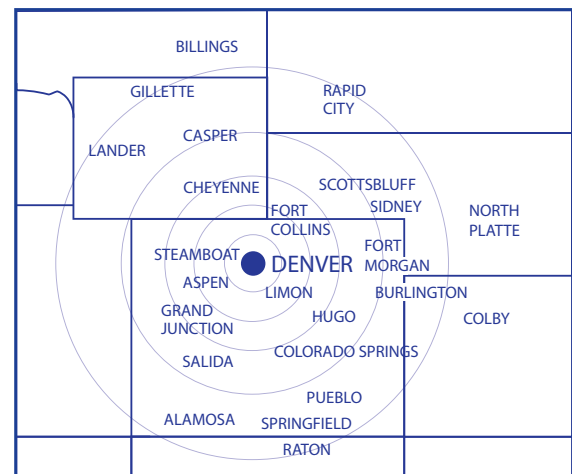
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