



# New Norton clinic has eight full-time staff

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to the clinic," he said. "That's a 13 percent increase over what we were seeing at the former clinic."

Miller attributed that increase partly to the accessibility and convenience of the new clinic, but perhaps more to the services provided at the hospital that patients can't find elsewhere. Since the clinic opened, he said, a new nurse practitioner has been added, bringing the full-time staff to eight, including four doctors and four "midlevel" practitioners.

All together, the hospital employs about 135 people full- and part-time, he said, making it among the largest employers in the county.

"We rank very favorably in how we stack up across the state for employment," Miller said. "Not every community has what we have, and we are fortunate to have a stable medical staff and employees who are committed to the mission of the hospital."

Along with strong staffing, Miller reported, the hospital also boasts some services that can't be found closer than about an hour's driving distance, and often much farther. The hospital provides obstetric services and expects to deliver 55 to 60 babies a year.

Dr. Glenda Maurer and Dr. Jeff McKinley, both family practice physicians, provide obstetrical services, and Dr. Ruben Silan, a general surgeon, performs cesarean deliveries at the hospital.

Dr. Marty Griffey practices internal medicine, which Miller said has allowed the hospital to care for patients here instead of having to send them to another hospital.

He said the hospital also provides full-time surgical services and surgical and anesthetic procedures can be scheduled for nearly any day of the week. The facility offers mammography services with a new digital mammography scanner. The digital technology allows for more accurate readings and faster turn-around time for results.

"Our drawing area for medical services has really extended," Miller said, "because we are the only hospital in a 50- or 60-mile radius to provide those services. We see a lot of patients we wouldn't see if there was another hospital nearby that offered the same services."

Miller said the hospital has completed about \$8 million in physical improvements over the past eight years and continues to expand its services, thanks in part to healthy annual profits, but that profits may soon be a thing of the past for rural hospitals.

This year's budget for the hospital is \$14.3 million, he said, with budgeted expenses of \$10.5 million. The revenue for the hospital is skewed, Miller said, by \$4.2 million of contractual expenses, which are budgeted as revenue, but aren't really cash flow for the hospital. Those include bad debts, charity care, Medicare and Medicaid adjustments, insurance adjustments and third-party-payer adjustments.

"We can't look at revenue without taking those adjustments into account," Miller said. "What looks like \$14.3 million dollars in rev-



Norton County EMS personnel helped care for a victim of smoke inhalation earlier this month at the victim's home in Norton. Jim Harper, who was home alone at the time of the incident, was using a clothes dryer when the appliance caught fire. Harper attempted unsuccessfully to remove the dryer from his home and suffered from smoke inhalation in the process. Pictured, (left to right) are EMS responders Magnum Shea and Pat Pomeroy, an unidentified Harper family member and EMS responder Nichole Hester, along with Harper on the gurney. — Photo By Dana Paxton/The Norton Telegram

enue is actually more like \$10 million."

After that adjustment, he said, salaries and benefits account for 61 percent of the overall budget for 2012, which is in line with the annual average 60 to 65 percent.

At the end of the 2011 fiscal year June 30, the administrator said, profits added up to just under \$7,000, a substantial decline from the \$243,000 in 2010. The average annual profit over the previous decade had been about \$570,000.

The administrator attributed the decrease to many challenges, not the least of which are rising costs and the cost of uncompensated care. When the facility cares for people who are uninsured or underinsured, he said, the hospital isn't always paid for those services. In larger hospitals, Miller said, those losses would be made up by operating profits.

"We just don't have the volume to make up for uncompensated care or the losses we take when we don't get paid for our services," he

said. "Medicare is supposed to pay 101 percent of costs (for patients covered under the program), but we often have so much loss that

the extra 1 percent doesn't cover our costs of providing care for uninsured or uninsured patients."

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This new reverse osmosis water filtration system has been installed at Goodland Regional Medical Center specifically for the new kidney dialysis unit. The dialysis machines need heavily filtered water to operate, and the system does not connect with the rest of the hospital. – Kevin Bottrell/The Goodland Star-News

# Goodland dialysis unit to open in April, 2012

By **Kevin Bottrell**

*The Goodland Star-News*  
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A long-planned kidney dialysis unit at Goodland Regional Medical Center will open its doors this spring.

The unit was held up for several months by the federal and state regulatory process, but got back on track late last year. Construction began on the nearly \$200,000 project in November.

In early February, workmen from Miller Construction of Goodland were installing water hookups for the four dialysis units and putting the finishing touches on a reverse osmosis water-filtration system. The machines themselves were set to arrive later in February.

The dialysis unit gets its own, dedicated water purification system, said Angela Heape, dialysis nurse manager, because the water has to be as pure as possible or complications can develop in the patients.

In dialysis, used when people's kidneys fail and can no longer cleanse their bodies of toxins, blood is extracted, cleaned and filtered,



- **Beds** – 25 as a Critical Access Hospital.
- **Revenue 2011** – \$14,153,299.
- **Loss 2011** – \$1.3 million.
- **County Money** – \$407,612 for operations, \$63,441 for ambulance.
- **Providers** – Four doctors, 36 consulting, seven courtesy, 19 allied.
- **Administrator** – Jay Jolly.
- **Phone** – (785) 890-3625.

and then put back into the body. The machines use about 100 gallons of water per treatment. The four machines are brand new, costing

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