

Celebrate 50 years of service at Melissa Memorial July 22

Written by Jes-c Brandt

Melissa Memorial Hospital is celebrating 50 years of service in Holyoke. Thursday, July 22 the community is invited to the hospital.

Starting the evening, MMH will join FBLA to show the completed clock tower, benches and time capsule at 5 p.m. outside the hospital. From 5:30-8 p.m., everyone will gather inside the hospital for appetizers and desserts, catered by Holyoke Marketplace. Giveaways will also be given to select visitors.

At 6 p.m. hospital board president Steve Young and hospital administrator John Ayoub will speak to guests and present a plaque to one hospital employee who has been there the full 50 years.

Throughout the evening tours of the hospital will be available. Additionally, there will be a live radio broadcast of the celebration, as well as audio tours for those tuning in.

MMH history

In 1960 the people of Phillips County took action in the face of a growing concern. At that time, Phillips County Hospital in Holyoke and a community hospital in Haxtun were not under the direction of two separate hospital districts.

Petitions began to circulate around both communities to establish separate East and West Phillips County Hospital districts.

July 11, 1960 the East Phillips County Hospital District was approved. The first members of the board of directors for the new district were Fred Peterson, Leslie Kunkel, Keith Ham, Emil Heermann and Oscar Beal.

Celebrate 50 years of service at Melissa Memorial July 22

Written by Jes-c Brandt

As Ayoub said when commenting on the 50th anniversary, in 1960 who would have thought that the hospital district would still be going strong 50 years later.

The first things on the docket for the new east district were discussion of building a nursing home and, if justifiable, a new hospital. So hospital progress was set in motion.

In October of 1960 Will E. Heginbotham proposed to the board that he fund the building of a new hospital, estimated to cost \$500,000, in the garden area north of his home. The board quickly voted unanimous acceptance of Heginbotham's gift to the community.

Several years after the board took on the new hospital project they were faced with difficulties getting started. The Enterprise was flooded with letters from community members expressing their desire for construction to be started as soon as possible.

Finally, in the summer of 1964 excavation work for the new hospital at 505 S. Baxter began. July 25, 1965 the hospital was dedicated. It became known as Melissa Memorial Hospital in memory of Heginbotham's mother, Melissa.

Holyoke residents gathered at the dedication to show their support of the new facility.

Fast forward to the 21st century, and Holyoke's hospital found itself in a similar situation. In the year 2000 the board began to consider the need for a new facility with more space.

Again there was a long gap between the initial stages of change and the construction of a new hospital. Nov. 18, 2006 was the official ground breaking for the current location of Melissa Memorial Hospital at 1001 E. Johnson St.

An open house was held March 7, 2008 to celebrate the building's completion and the hospital's move to a new location. Like a repeat of the celebration decades ago, the people of Holyoke appeared at the open house to show their support of the hospital's service to the community for

Celebrate 50 years of service at Melissa Memorial July 22

Written by Jes-c Brandt

all these years.

Now in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the creation of the East Phillips County Hospital District, Ayoub says they are once again looking to the community to make the event a success.

It's always been about the people, he said. The people of Holyoke are the ones who have made the progress throughout the last 50 years possible, and it's the people who the hospital is here to serve. It only seems right that this celebration should be focused on fellowship.