

## Hospital board wraps up 2012

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

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Board members discussed the financial standings of 2012 as well as set goals for upcoming years at the Feb. 26 East Phillips County Hospital District board meeting.

While the district saw fewer patients at the hospital and the clinic in 2012 than they did the previous year, the specialty clinics actually saw an increase in patients.

New to the district this year were the additions of a dermatologist, pulmonologist and a second neurologist. Along with other specialty areas including audiology, cardiology, ENT, general surgery, obstetrics/gynecology, oncology, ophthalmology, orthopedic, podiatry, sleep studies and urology, the specialty clinics saw 2,908 patient presentations. That number is an increase of 646 from 2011.

Overall, there were 21,363 patient presentations for medical assistance recorded at the district. Nine-tenths of one percent of those patients were for inpatient care while 45.8 percent were for outpatient care.

The remaining 53.3 percent is made up of clinic patients. Patient presentations from the Family Practice of Holyoke primary care clinic account for 39.6 percent while 13.6 percent are from the specialty clinics at MMH. Family Practice had 8,470 patients, down 440 from 2011.

MMH administrator John Ayoub noted that part of the drop in numbers may be partially attributed to the changing of staff in the past year. Two doctors left the district in the year, as well as a nurse practitioner.

“Every time you have a doctor that leaves the clinic, you’re probably going to see less patients,” Ayoub explained. “As we start to build back up, we see our numbers start to go the other way.”

Financially, the district ended 2012 \$359,000 in the black. Outpatient care represented 64 percent of the revenue.

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Ayoub stated that they are physically sound and in no danger.

“We try to make a little bit of money every year so that we can reinvest it into the organization,” Ayoub said.

In October the district began refinancing the hospital. If the interest rate can be dropped from 6.75 percent to closer to four percent, the hospital could save \$220,000 a year. There is 20 years still remaining on the mortgage.

Recently, the district received a commitment letter from Housing and Urban Development, who secured the mortgage to build the MMH facility. All that is left is to set a closing date and the new rate will go into place upon closing.

Looking to the future, the district is still hoping to recruit another physician. The ultimate goal is to have four physicians and three nurse practitioners on staff.

Later in March, the district has set up a time for a doctor and her family to come to town to interview for a possible spot at the hospital.

Extra emphasis placed on community relations

One of the district goals for the upcoming year is to maintain a high level of visibility amongst the community. This was also addressed at last week’s board meeting.

Part of that visibility includes attending events such as the Legacy Event which was put on by the MMH Foundation. Ayoub noted that this helps the board identify the needs of the community.

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“This is their (the community’s) hospital. It is a community asset,” Ayoub said. “I think it is important that folks not see the hospital as some other corporation. We are here for them. If they have questions or concerns, we want to know about it.”

To further advance the communication channels with the public, the district will be participating in a community health needs assessment.

A meeting is tentatively scheduled for the end of May. People and organizations will be asked to voice their opinion on what the hospital can do to better accommodate the needs of the community.

### **Health fair scheduled**

The annual health fair will kick off Saturday, March 23 from 9 a.m. to noon. A number of services from many different areas of health care will be made available.

Other than having blood drawn, all services will be free of charge.

### **Other business**

In other business Feb. 26, board members:

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—recognized Steve Deaver for the work he has put in with the hospital board over the last six years. Deaver was awarded a plaque for his tenure as a board member.

—announced that Susan Des-lauriers, RN and EMT-P, has taken over as the new trauma coordinator for Melissa Memorial Hospital. Along with her new position, Deslauriers will continue to work as a nurse as well.

—noted the next board meeting is Tuesday, March 26.

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