

## 4 babies born at MMH in Jan.;board looks to expand OB

Written by April Peregoy

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Due to the addition of nurse practitioners Claudia Powell and Judy Sudmeier, more women are turning to Melissa Memorial Hospital and Family Practice Clinic of Holyoke for obstetric and gynecological care. According to hospital administrator John Ayoub, a total of eight babies were born at MMH in 2008. In January, 2009 alone, there has already been four babies born at the hospital.

As a result, he told East Phillips County Hospital District board members at their meeting Monday, Jan. 26, MMH is taking steps to bolster the services offered in that area.

Recently, the hospital purchased a prenatal care package with the help of grants obtained by Melissa Memorial Hospital Foundation and Colorado Rural Health Center. The package includes PowerPoint presentations, books and DVDs on prenatal care that will be used to educate expecting mothers.

Rather than providing general education classes on pregnancy and labor, Ayoub said hospital staff will educate each mother one-on-one with a program tailor-fit for each individual.

On April 14, hospital staff will receive a very special guest: speaker, author and pediatrician Dr. Marianne Neifert, better known as "Dr. Mom." A recognized expert in lactation management, she will be visiting MMH on behalf of the HealthONE Alliance Lactation Program at Rose Medical Center in Denver, as part of its Colorado Can Do 5! campaign.

The campaign promotes breastfeeding by giving hospitals the tools and education to teach new mothers about the process so they feel more comfortable and secure with it, ensuring they will breastfeed their babies successfully, and will continue to do so during the first year.

Hospital board members also re-examined and approved changes to their ends policy Monday night that include goals for obstetrics and mammography care. One of these goals is to offer digital mammograms by 2010. They also hope to come up with some kind of agreement with Dr. David Reed of Wray for him to come to MMH to perform C-sections, rather than sending the mothers away for the surgery.

Dr. McClellan to  
attend Health Fair

Community members who attend this year's Health Fair, scheduled for Saturday, March 21, may have a chance to meet Dr. Danielle McClellan, who will be joining Family Practice Clinic as a new physician in July.

"This should be a good way to introduce her to the staff and community," said Ayoub.

In other health fair news, he noted that, at past health fairs, those who needed to schedule appointments at the clinic after receiving their blood results had to wait until it opened the following Monday. This year, Ayoub said there will be a clinic employee available to make appointments for those who need them.

Meanwhile, the search still continues for one more physician to join the clinic staff. In December, Ayoub had mentioned he was in serious talks with a possible doctor. However, he told the board on Monday, that doctor has decided to go somewhere else. Currently, he is talking with another physician, and his hope is to find one who can join the staff with McClellan this summer.

As for the CFO position, Ayoub said he has a number of interested applicants and, right now, is doing phone interviews with them to narrow the list. Since former CFO Shelly Larson left in December, Jim Rush of Oregon has been acting as interim CFO and will continue to do so until the position is filled, which should be done by March.

Finding qualified physicians willing to work at any rural hospital is not an easy task, which is

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why EPCHD board members took a step at Monday's meeting that may help them in the future. A new medical school, Rocky Vista University School of Osteopathic Medicine, located in Parker, has signed an agreement with the board to send third- and fourth-year medical students to MMH for internships.

Since the school is new, it will take a couple of years before the students are far enough along to start their internships. Still, said Ayoub, the hope is they will have a good enough experience to return to MMH for their residencies, and perhaps, even after getting their degrees for their practices.

In the meantime, MMH is holding education classes for the providers it already has to keep them up to date. In February, the High Plains Research Network is bringing the hospital an asthma kit and sponsoring an asthma education class for the clinical staff. Other doctors who will visit in February include a dermatologist and an allergist.

### 2008 is successful year

Reflecting upon all its accomplishments in 2008, Ayoub and EPCHD board members acknowledged it was a very successful year for the hospital district. During that time, the hospital moved into a new, larger facility, welcomed two new nurse practitioners as well as hired a new physician and successfully completed four surveys to be in compliance with the state.

Though the district started out under budget in 2008 due to the hospital's move, the bottom line has since become much closer to, if not meeting, the monthly budgets.

"I'm excited about the direction we are headed," said Ayoub. "January was a good month in terms of the number of patients we had, and that's due to our new facility, having a fantastic staff and a supportive board of directors."

To show how well the hospital is doing in comparison to others around the state and the nation, Ayoub brought Quality Report data from the website [hospitalconnect.com](http://hospitalconnect.com). The site uses graphs to compare the quality of individual hospitals to the state and national averages.

In every area that data was collected, MMH ranked at or above the national and state averages.

### Other business

In other business, EPCHD board members:

- held a 25-minute executive session for the yearly evaluation of the administrator. However, two board members, Gary Rahe and Steve Deaver, were not present, so the evaluation was tabled until the next EPCHD board meeting Monday, Feb. 23.

- were introduced to temporary CFO Jim Rush.

- heard a report on the pharmacy from Pat Notter and toured its area.

- were notified by Ayoub the hospital is now in good standing with the state after results from the follow-up Rural Health Clinic survey came back clear.

- were informed the recently purchased claim scrubber has been installed and will soon be in use.

- closed on its loan with Housing and Urban Development.

- approved the 2009 Corporate Compliance Work Plan.

- appointed two committees to review bylaws. Sheryl Farnsworth, Ray Malleck and Steve Young were appointed to work on the MMH bylaws and Steve Deaver, Gary Rahe and Steve Young will work on the Family Practice Clinic and staff.