

Hospital hopes to 'grow own' doctor

Written by Chris Lee

The ground has been broken in the process to hopefully help an interested student through school in order to move back to Holyoke and work at Melissa Memorial Hospital.

East Phillips County Board members agreed at their Monday, Feb. 21 meeting to work with Melissa Memorial Hospital Foundation to help “grow their own physician.”

Hopes are to help a student with tuition or loans with the understanding that that student would move back and work in Holyoke once school is complete.

The process is still in the early stages but has the approval of the board.

The ultimate idea is for the hospital to provide funding, the foundation to gather donations and contributions to support funding, and for MMH to set up a committee to figure out more details.

MMH administrator John Ayoub stressed the organization wouldn't see returns from the investment right away due to the length of time it takes for medical students to get through school.

“I think this is a really exciting opportunity that will pay dividends later,” Ayoub said. “It's been a concept that we've been discussing for so long, to actually see the first step taken to make it a reality I think is really exciting.”

Clarification of FNP positions

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According to Ayoub, Family Nurse Practitioner Judy Sudmeier has announced she will be moving and no longer working at the hospital. A concrete date hasn't been set as to when she will be leaving, but it is expected sometime this summer. She has expressed a willingness to help ensure a smooth transition to the new nurse practitioner once someone is hired. Ayoub said the organization wishes her nothing but the best as she moves on.

On the same note, Deana O'Gorman had announced she would be leaving the organization as well, but Ayoub said she has agreed to stay with the hospital for another year, or at least until July 2012.

Administrator reports activity

Ayoub said physician recruitment efforts are continuing. He said they are still speaking with two family practice doctors. He also said things are looking great with the addition of Dr. Rick Amesquita within the clinic. "We've had a very good reaction," Ayoub said.

Ayoub announced three ear, nose and throat doctors from Denver will work together to offer a specialty clinic beginning in March. The clinic will help cover the absence of Dr. Lowry who no longer sees patients at the clinic.

The clinic will also be welcoming Dr. J. Kevin Belville, an ophthalmologist from Hastings, Neb. Ayoub said they hope to see him begin a specialty clinic in April. He will also be at the health fair March 19.

Ayoub added sleep studies will begin again at the clinic.

The administrator said results from clinic surveys have been great so far. The surveys began in January, and every single person that entered the clinic received a survey. Out of the 661

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handed out, 217 were returned. Of the 661 patients, many visited the clinic more than once and likely didn't fill out multiple surveys.

Negotiations are still moving forward with the purchase of an electronic medical record system for the hospital. Ayoub said they had a good demonstration on site in early February which provided a great opportunity for the nurses to walk through the system. An estimated deadline of March 31 is set to have the system purchased or a contract signed.

Due to bandwidth issues with the pagers used by staff, the frequency needs to be reduced and MMH is hoping to merge into a system that doesn't require the purchase of all brand new pagers. They are working with the comm center and testing out a system that would page through cell phones instead of actual pagers, thus saving the cost.

Facility planning was a topic the board discussed during last week's meeting. Having a plan in place for future projects is something they feel would be important. Instead of acting as a committee, they agreed to meet as a board Friday, March 4 at noon to discuss the issue further and get the ball rolling on a plan.

Other business

In other business Feb. 21, board members:

—held a 30-minute executive session for negotiations and matters required to be kept confidential by federal or state law or rules or regulations.

—approved credentialing for Philip Cook, Richard Ruderman, Marjorie Wiedeman, Douglas Carter, John Drury, Susan Enlow, Suzanne Homer, John Wright, Todd Nelson, Dan Kreider, David Board, Judith Corey, Arlin Hatfield, Ronald Homer and Thomas Nevelidine.

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