Last week, Melissa Memorial Hospital administrator John Ayoub was pleased to announce he received notification that future Family Practice physician Dr. Danielle McClellan has been selected as a recipient for The Colorado Health Foundation Physician Loan Repayment Program.

McClellan was awarded a total $150,000 ($50,000 per year for three years) for tuition reimbursement to serve as a family practice physician in a rural community. She was one of 16 physicians chosen to receive the award out of 53 applicants.

In the notification letter sent to Ayoub, The Colorado Health Foundation (TCHF) wrote, “Melissa Memorial Hospital is a critical component of Colorado’s health care safety net, and has demonstrated an organizational commitment to providing services of the highest quality to Colorado communities.”

A very pleased Ayoub also noted another reason McClellan was chosen is because of support from three community organizations. Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, Phillips County Economic Development Corp. and Melissa Memorial Hospital Foundation each wrote letters of support that were sent along with the grant request to the Awards Committee.

“We couldn’t have done it without their cooperation,” said Ayoub.

Just last year TCHF began funding the Physician Loan Repayment Program, which awards $2 million each year to 16 new doctors. In return for practicing in rural or needy urban communities throughout the state, participants receive payments toward their educational debts.

Not only do the grants help place doctors in rural and underserved communities, they also help hospitals retain those physicians. It’s hoped that with the burden of financial debt lifted off their shoulders, the new doctors will find their work rewarding, and will stay after their commitments expire.

McClellan is currently a third-year resident at Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins. She will be graduating in June and is scheduled to join the clinic staff on July 28, 2009.

Special meeting held Friday

East Phillips County Hospital District held a special board meeting Friday, April 24 to review the district’s audit.

BKD, LLC presented the audit. Though the numbers will not change, some finalization of things still needed to be done before the board could officially accept the report. It was passed in a resolution at Monday night’s regular board meeting April 27. More on that meeting will appear in next week’s Enterprise.

After viewing the numbers, Ayoub was excited to point out the district ended the year with a positive bottom line of $191,000—a huge improvement over last year when the district was over $16,000 in the red.

The turn-around, according to Ayoub, is due to adjustments that were made in the accounting of expenses. The big one: an expense of $165,000 in construction costs for the new hospital building was spread out in payments of $6,000 per year over 25 years.

The hospital’s positive bottom line, he said, is a big deal because it shows how the community was capable of constructing a new facility and paying it off, while still ending up with an excess in revenue. “And all without raising taxes, too,” he added.