

Hospital to break ground on new emergency room

By Tiffany Green The Cullman Times, Ala.
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Aug. 22, 2009--Cullman Regional Medical Center will hold a groundbreaking ceremony for its revamped emergency room at 1 p.m. Thursday.

"We are building a state-of-the-art emergency room for the enhanced delivery of care to our community," CEO Jim Weidner said in a prepared statement. "CRMC celebrates 70 years of healthcare excellence this year and with the ER expansion project, we are setting the stage for outstanding emergency care, well into the future."

The ceremony will be held at CRMC behind the current emergency room. In attendance will be Golden Window campaign donors and volunteers, CRMC Foundation board members, county and city government officials, members of the CRMC medical staff, hospital employees, Pegasus Emergency Medicine physicians, project architects, construction company officials and CRMC board members.

The expansion, which should raise the total emergency room space to 13,480 square feet, is slated to increase the size of the emergency room by approximately 66 percent. The number of beds in the department will increase from 18 to 24, while the existing emergency room department will also be renovated.

The expansion is needed due to an increase in patients at the CRMC emergency room, which has risen from approximately 23,310 people in 1998 to 30,757 people in 2008. In preparation for the expansion, the hospital has also recruited a new team of board-certified, residency trained emergency medicine physicians to staff the CRMC emergency department. "The entire CRMC medical team is excited about the advancements to emergency care in our community," emergency medical director Dr. Neil Schamban said previously. "The expansion will enhance the patient experience starting with the initial triage treatment to the ending discharge process."

Once the work is finished, Weidner said the hospital should be able to handle 40,000 patients per year. "Currently, the average time a patient is spending in CRMC's ER from arrival to discharge is approximately 99 minutes, well below the state and national averages," he said. "We believe the extra capacity will help us lower treatment time in the future even further." The project is being funded by the Golden Window campaign, a fundraising effort sponsored by the CRMC Foundation.

"We are absolutely thrilled with the response the community has given to the foundation's capital campaign efforts. This fundraising project has been a success in every aspect, from those volunteering their time to the overall financial results," said Darla West, CRMC Foundation director. Previous estimates have called for a \$5 million fundraising goal, though CRMC officials did not provide an estimated cost for the project by press time.

"Many local citizens, businesses, physicians and CRMC employees, as well as our local government and national government, came together to support the campaign for the new emergency room department," West said. "On behalf of the CRMC Foundation, we would like to thank everyone for their dedication to advancing patient care."

With the recent closing of Woodland Medical Center following its purchase and closure by CRMC Weidner said the expansion should help the hospital accommodate the increased patient load. "Currently, the average time a patient is spending in CRMC's ER from arrival to discharge is approximately 99 minutes, well below the state and national averages," he said. "We believe the extra capacity will help us lower treatment time in the future even further."

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