



Broken Bow, Nebraska

## Melham plan uses new care ideas

Wednesday, 29 July 2009



By MICHELLE ZLOMKE

*Chief Managing Editor*

- Bigger patient rooms.
- Larger windows.
- Reduced noise levels.
- Better work spaces.

Mike Steckler listed those traits and others that will improve patient care and promote healing in the new 23-bed wing under construction at Jennie Melham Medical Center in Broken Bow.

Steckler, Melham's Chief Executive Officer, hosted Broken Bow's Rotary Club members on a tour of the wing Monday.

"A healing environment for health care is a place that is quiet, infectious safe and provides good communication for staff," Steckler said during the tour.

The new wing may be open in early December, according to Steckler.

Steckler said patients will experience a quieter hospital stay in the new rooms.

Six-inch insulated walls line the rooms and hallways.

All rooms will be private, not shared with other patients.

Pass-through closets can be accessed from outside the room, reducing the need for non-medical staff to enter patient rooms to inventory and stock supplies.

An internal wireless phone system will replace the traditional intercom system. Each staff member will have a wireless phone while they are working.

Additionally, the design of the new wing will help prevent the spread of infection. Supplies and staff will be assigned to specific areas to minimize the possibility of spreading germs and bacteria between areas, Steckler said.

Two patient rooms will be high-filtration and have a more frequent air exchange for people with highly infectious diseases.

The private rooms minimize threats of spreading infection, Steckler said.

The new wing will also provide a more efficient work environment for staff, and allow them to ensure safe patient care.

The new nurses' station is central to the rest of the wing, but will no longer be a stopping point for people who come to the hospital with general questions or who need other care.

"We aren't going to run the hospital from the nurses' station any more," Steckler said. "This part of our building is only going to be for patients and hospital staff."

There will be computer workstations throughout the wing, including at intervals in hallways, so medical staff doesn't have to return to a stationary desk in a specific room to access or enter patient records.

The pass-through closets from the hallways to patient rooms will have a locked container that will be stocked by pharmacy staff for the patient in that room.

Throughout the new wing, there will be more waiting areas for families, as well as more places for staff to meet privately with people outside patient rooms.

This \$12 million expansion project is funded through accumulated building funds and hospital revenue, Steckler said.

Currently, the private, non-profit facility is debt-free and requires no tax dollars for its improvements or operation. He said expenses are met through generous donations and bequests to the hospital, as well as with current cash flow.

The hospital was built in 1971 and has been debt-free since 1973, Steckler said.

The new addition will include 23 new private patient rooms and a new nurses' station. Some of the rooms will be designed for specialized in-patient care. Once in-patient services are moved to the new addition, the current in-patient portion will be remodeled for different services.

This major project equals the work completed during 1990 and 2003 expansions, the first two phases of the hospital's long-range plans, Steckler said.

Those projects relocated services within the hospital, added administrative service offices, and improved areas for specialty, surgical and outpatient services.

The addition is adjacent to an area that was formerly the hospital's main entrance. The structure extends to the west, about six feet past the current west boundary of the parking lot.

The design of the new rooms will provide better work flow for the medical staff in each room. The rooms will each have three zones.

The first zone at the entry will be a work area for hospital staff and will include a sink, work surface and cabinets. The cabinets will be stocked from an access door in the hallway to minimize disruption to the patient in the room.

The second zone, for patient care, will include the bed, a chair, over the bed table and cabinets for a medical computer, call system components, phone and medical equipment.

The third zone in the room will accommodate visitors and family members and will include a fold-out couch.

Two rooms will meet the needs of bariatric patients who weigh more than 400 pounds. The rooms will include special beds, chairs and lifting equipment.

Two rooms will be equipped with a high air exchange system for patients whose illness may be spread through airborne pathogens. The air handling system will exchange directly with outside air.

Two rooms will accommodate critical care patients and will be located near the nursing station.

Additionally, the new wing will include two labor and delivery rooms and new work areas for the staff assisting with births.

The windows of the labor and delivery rooms will overlook a courtyard with a healing garden,

walking path and meditative area.

The hospital's new nursery will be located near the new nurses' station in the wing.

The new main nurses' station and sub-nurses' station will be designed to better meet the work needs of nurses and physicians.

"We'll be doing the same work, we'll just be getting better place to do it," Steckler said. "We've designed this to keep things efficient and effective and keep people happy."

Once the new addition is complete, staff will move in-patient services to the new wing.

After that move, builders will begin remodeling the former in-patient care area.

There will be new work areas, including a respiratory therapy department, cardiac rehab and physical therapy unit.

The current physical therapy and cardiac rehab spaces will be converted to business office space, placing it closer to the hospital's main entrance.

Remodeled areas will also accommodate a sleep study area, three respite rooms for patients' families and an E.R. physician on-call room. A chapel will also be developed in the hospital for the first time, Steckler said.