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October 01, 2010

9/29/2010 8:50:00 AM

One year of work completed on hospital addition

By **DELORES MEISTER**
 News Correspondent

WEST POINT — West Point residents are interested observers of one of the biggest construction sites in the area.

A three-year, \$21 million state-of-the-art addition and renovation of St. Francis Memorial Hospital in West Point is seen as a way to help ensure the future of top-quality area health care and the continuance of West Point as a regional medical center.

St. Francis Memorial Hospital, built in 1949-1950, is getting a 52,000-square-foot, three-story frontal addition. Local contractor M S Construction (Mark Schlickbernd) is in partnership with Beckenhauer Construction of Norfolk.

The crews are using “green” construction principles, using ideas that make environmental and economic sense. Construction, which began in 2009, will take about 24 to 30 months, with a tentative opening date set for mid-year 2012.



Once the external shell is completed, proposed phasing of project interior remodeling will continue into 2013 and 2014.

Now one year into construction, ground work and a level parking lot in front of the main entry has already been completed.

The partial lower level or basement houses the mechanical, heating and electrical equipment.

The first level will have a new front drop-off, entry lobby, an expanded Dinklage Medical Clinic and expanded rehabilitation area to allow more space for patient privacy.

The second level will have a cafeteria, offices, lab, billings and conference space.

The third story will have a total of 25 patient rooms described as “family friendly.” Seventeen patient rooms will be in the new construction.

The current patient rooms on the third level will be remodeled and enlarged to make the other eight patient rooms. The existing patient rooms were built for the 1950s era and are now too small to accommodate today’s medical equipment.

Supporters in West Point say the hospital is more than the physical structure and the economic entity. The not-for-profit hospital is the heart and soul of this community, and, as it has grown physically, it also has grown in compassion and caring, they say.

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Administrator Ron Briggs, chief executive officer of the hospital since 1995, is pleased with the services the hospital is able to offer.

“It is important for a community to have health care for our lifestyle,” Briggs said. “We offer MRI, CT, digital mammography, hips, knees and general surgery.”

Briggs said the hospital is the largest employer in Cuming County with 235 employees and an annual payroll of \$11 million.

“We use six local banks to fund our bond-issues. We use local contractors. Our success as a local health care is a two-way stream. People in the community are our whole service, and they can’t think of how they would live without us,” Briggs said.

Franciscan Care Services has a 12-member board of citizens from the surrounding area responsible for St. Francis Memorial Hospital, St. Joseph’s Retirement Community and Dinklage Medical Center.

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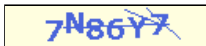
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