

polk's hospitals, clinics

Good Economic News Hard to Find - Except in Polk Medicine

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PIERRE DUCHARME | THE LEDGER

THE MAIN NURSES STATION is ready to go on the new fourth floor at Heart of Florida Regional Medical Center in Davenport. The fourth floor expansion is just one example of growth in Polk's medical sector.

LAKELAND | Despite a sluggish economy, it's been a busy year for Polk County's hospitals and clinics - and it doesn't seem to be slowing down any time soon. Facility expansions, new services and staff additions are all common threads.

Here's a glimpse at what's going on at Polk's major hospitals and clinics.

BARTOW REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

According to Susan Sartain, director of marketing and physician relations at Bartow Regional Medical Center, the facility has 460 employees, and it continues to add employees as it adds beds.

In 2007, the medical center welcomed more beds and new equipment, programs and systems when it opened the post-surgical and progressive care units, which created room for 72 beds.

The medical center has also added Safe-Scan technology to ensure the right medications are given to the appropriate patients, in accurate doses and at the right times.

It also installed its Picture and Archival Communication System (PACS) in 2007. PACS is a digital radiology system that allows a physician to evaluate, retrieve and store digital radiological images.

BOND CLINIC

Bond Clinic P.A., is celebrating its 60-year anniversary this year with additional staff, facility expansions and added services.

The clinic currently has 382 employees, including six advanced registered nurse practitioners and 52 contracted physicians in 21 board-certified specialties. According to Katie Gernert, director of public relations and customer service at Bond Clinic, the clinic has added 10 physicians since Feb. 1.

"We have expanded our facility to include a satellite location at 199 Avenue B. It is located in the Verizon building in downtown Winter Haven," Gernert said. "The first floor renovation was completed in summer 2007 and the first phase of the second floor will be completed in September 2008."

The first phase of the second floor includes the Bond Clinic Women's Health Center, which includes the obstetrics and gynecology department with four board-certified physicians. Women's diagnostics and Bond Aesthetics will also move to the second floor this fall.

A new high-field open MRI will be installed this fall at the Verizon building as well. The machine has state-of-the-art breast-imaging capabilities, can hold up to 520 pounds and allows for a guardian to accompany a child during the test, which can decrease the need for sedation. It also contains visual themes, such as space or nature, and those images are then projected on the walls.

The clinic, which has converted to an electronic medical records system, will also launch a patient satisfaction surveying tool in September.

CLARK & DAUGHTREY MEDICAL GROUP

Clark and Daughtrey Medical Group P.A. will welcome three new doctors by mid-September. One is a hospitalist who will be based at Lakeland Regional Medical Center, bringing the clinic's number of hospitalists to five. The clinic will also welcome a urologic surgeon - the first it will have on its medical staff - and a medical oncologist, bringing the number of staff medical oncologists to three.

Michael Gordon, marketing manager at Clark and Daughtrey, said the clinic has 54 providers, including 45 medical doctors and nine advanced practitioners (eight advanced nurses and one physician assistant). Gordon also mentioned the clinic recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of its 45,000-square-foot building on South Florida Avenue in Lakeland.

HEART OF FLORIDA REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

In approximately one month, Heart of Florida Regional Medical Center will open its fourth floor to the public. Construction for the medical center's fourth and fifth floor expansions has taken

place over the past few years. The fourth floor will be a surgery and orthopedics floor with 52 beds, bringing the medical center's total number of beds to 194.

"That's our biggest news," said Linda Vendl, director of marketing.

Vendl said the medical center filed for accreditation from the Society of Chest Pain Centers and will have an on-site visit in the next few weeks. She also said Heart of Florida will apply for Primary Stroke Center Certification through the Agency for Health Care Administration and The Joint Commission, in order to receive stroke center designation.

Currently, there are 180 physicians on staff.

LAKELAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Lakeland Regional Medical Center has continued to focus its growth in the areas of orthopedics, neurosurgery and cancer treatment, according to Cindy Sternlicht, director of public relations and marketing communications.

LRMC now employs four orthopedic surgeons, who in July moved into the Lakeland Regional Orthopedic Clinic at 2120 Harden Blvd., to accommodate their expanding practice.

LRMC also employs three neurosurgeons who perform spinal and cranial surgeries.

Overall, LRMC has approximately 4,500 employees and has been recognized by Polk Works as a "Best Place to Work" award recipient for four years in a row.

The Lakeland Regional Cancer Center recently welcomed the completed expansion of its chemotherapy area due to growth in patient volume. The center recently added two medical oncologists, a surgical oncologist and a gynecologic oncologist, who will join the practice in September.

Sternlicht also said LRMC's heart and vascular programs will be major areas of focus. In July, LRMC's Stroke Care Program was awarded certification from the Joint Commission for Primary Stroke Centers. In addition, LRMC's cardiac surgery program was awarded the highest possible distinction as determined by the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) National Adult Cardiac Surgery Database.

LAKE WALES MEDICAL CENTER

In June 2007, Lake Wales Medical Center opened its new, advanced cardiovascular catheterization lab and exceeded initial projections by performing 481 cardiac catheterizations in the first 12 months of operation, according to Maryemma Bachelder, director of marketing.

Currently, construction is ongoing for the reconstruction of the third floor of the Deeley A. Hunt Building, where 32 new private acute-care patient rooms will be added to meet patient demand.

"We anticipate the 32 new private patient rooms will open in early 2009," Bachelder said.

The medical center recently added some equipment, including a dual-head nuclear medicine camera, endoscopy systems, specialized ear/nose/throat surgical devices, 13 new patient beds, an ultrasound/echocardiograph machine and an upgrade to a 16-slice CT scanner. In April, Lake Wales Medical Center became the first facility in Polk County to implement digital mammography, Bachelder said. It also recently finished the installation of a PACS.

According to Bachelder, the medical center has 460 employees and has expanded its physician team to include doctors in the following areas: neurology, internal medicine, urology, general surgery and orthopedic surgery.

WATSON CLINIC

Construction is underway for Watson Clinic LLP's new 51,000-square-foot medical office building, located on the corner of North Florida Avenue and Bella Vista Street in Lakeland.

The three-story Bella Vista building will house the clinic's otolaryngology and dermatology departments, pathology laboratory and hearing center, as well as a medical spa with a separate entrance. The building is scheduled to open in January 2009, according to Nancy Martinez of Watson Clinic's marketing communications and media relations department.

The clinic will expand its dermatological services in September, when it opens a new office in Zephyrhills.

Martinez said the clinic's medical and surgical specialties have increased to 40 offerings this year, with the addition of a podiatrist/podiatric surgeon and a physician specializing in the area of infectious disease. About 26 physicians have joined the clinic's staff in the past year. New physicians in the fields of radiology and dermatology, as well as a hospitalist, are expected to join the clinic's staff by the end of the year, Martinez said.

In addition, Watson Clinic has commenced involvement with the University of South Florida (USF) College of Medicine for a new orthopedic residency program. This collaboration will allow select graduates to perform their residency with the clinic's team of orthopedic physicians and surgeons.

WINTER HAVEN HOSPITAL

Winter Haven Hospital is in the final stages of completing its \$40 million, 65,000-square-foot expansion that will include four operating rooms, space for a cancer center, a lobby expansion and outpatient diagnostic services that can be readily accessed to patients, according to Lance Anastasio, the hospital's president and CEO.

The new building will also include a new cardiac rehabilitation program. Anastasio said the building is scheduled to be open Sept. 23.

The hospital will also collaborate with the University of Florida in regard to the new cancer center. The contractual partnership will provide the hospital's physicians and professional staff with continuing education opportunities as well as allow for clinical trials, Anastasio said. A UF professor will reside in Winter Haven to oversee the program.

In January, the hospital opened its cardiac step-down unit, and in July it began offering a new service when it secured contracts with obstetrics hospitalists. Done with the support of hospital physicians, Anastasio said this service was instituted because of the number of unassigned obstetrical patients. The hospital will also open another Family Health Center in September to meet community need. This seventh location will be located on Dundee Road.

A survey team for the Magnet Recognition Program will visit the hospital in September to determine if it should be awarded with the nursing excellence award. According to Anastasio, hospitals with a Magnet recognition have a more stable workforce, fewer complications, shorter lengths of stay, a lower mortality rate for patients and more satisfied patients. "We think it will be a major step if we can accomplish that goal, and we rather expect to get it," he said.

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