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\$95 MILLION MEDICAL FACILITY

New hospital in Findlay aims to put patients first

By JENNIFER FEEHAN
BLADE STAFF WRITER

FINDLAY - Even though Blanchard Valley Hospital Chief Executive Officer Scott Malaney doesn't have an office in Findlay's new \$95 million hospital, he's excited about what the project means for patients and staff.

"The way I describe it is the building itself is nothing more and nothing less than an enabler," Mr. Malaney said. "Because of the size of the rooms and the private rooms, we'll be able to bring more services to the patient rather than take the patient to the services."

Patients and caregivers will be able to discuss health issues confidentially. Family members will have a sleeper sofa and private bathroom to use during their stay. Patients will have access to the Internet and e-mail from their beds on flat-screen monitors perched on the wall. And those walls are painted in soft earth tones like sage green.

"We did try and follow some pretty solid research around the healing process - the natural light, the open spaces - it really has been shown to clinically help people heal quicker," Mr. Malaney said. "I don't know that we'll be able to measure that, but it will be interesting to see if we can."

The new six-story hospital, which is set to receive patients in mid February, has been under construction on South Main Street next to the old hospital for more than two years. Open houses for the public are scheduled for 1 to 5 p. m. Sunday and again on Jan. 28.



Jan Macmann, right, a registered nurse in the maternity ward, shows her family - from left, Allison, 12; husband Gary, and Julie, 10 - a state-of-the-art infant warmer in the Well Baby Nursery at Blanchard Valley Hospital; star sparklets on the ceiling give the babies something on which their eyes can focus. (THE BLADE/AMY E. VOIGT)

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Jean Gralak, director of facility reconstruction, said the 190,000-square-foot hospital still is licensed for 141 beds, but unlike the old hospital, all will be private rooms with the latest technology and features designed specifically to meet patient and staff needs.

Day rooms with huge windows, comfortable furniture and rockers, and kitchenettes are on every floor for patients feeling well enough to leave their rooms or those preparing to make the transition back to home.



Employees mingle and check out some of the amenities in the lobby of the new, \$95 million hospital.

(THE BLADE/AMY E. VOIGT)

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"You don't feel like you're in a hospital in this room," Ms. Gralak said.

She said the hospital also tried to focus on patient dignity - something that can suffer in big, noisy hospitals. The lobby elevators are just for visitors, she explained, while a separate set of elevators was installed in the rear of the new hospital to transport patients as well as housekeeping carts and supplies.

"It's a fact that a quieter environment is more conducive to healing and getting better," Ms. Gralak said.

Blanchard Valley also created a private discharge area where patients leaving the hospital are brought via the rear elevators, discharged, and then picked up to go home rather than being wheeled through the public lobby.

High-tech nurses stations have noisy printers and fax machines tucked away in separate rooms. Counters are lower "to invite conversation" between family and staff, Ms. Gralak said.

Lee Ann Wallace, director of nursing, said staff members were actively involved in designing the new hospital, which includes a staff lounge and locker room on every floor.

The obstetrics floor features a lactation room where employees can pump breast milk in privacy.

As part of its move to the new hospital, Blanchard Valley plans to take care of a greater number of premature and sick infants. It upgraded its license from Level 1 to Level 2, meaning more of the tiny and sick babies who were once flown to Toledo for care will now be able to stay in Findlay with their mothers, Ms. Wallace said.

Ms. Gralak said the building project - one of the largest undertaken by a northwest Ohio hospital in recent years - finished slightly under budget and only a couple of weeks behind schedule. More than \$13.5 million of its \$95 million price tag was donated by community members and businesses, including a \$3 million gift from Thomas and Kathleen Donnell for whom the new patient tower is named.

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