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E'town hospital finished phase one in renovation project

First phase of \$6.7 million project now complete

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ELIZABETHTOWN -- With surgical precision, a ribbon was cut to officially celebrate completion of the first phase of Elizabethtown Community Hospital's \$6.7 million expansion and renovation.

Ulrich Hoffmann, Board of Directors president, spoke of the importance of the project to the hospital and the community. He specifically thanked Helen Paul and Jamie Paul Clark for their generosity in getting the fundraising going.

Hospital Administrator/CEO Rod Boula brought up the many years of planning that went into the addition and renovation.

"When we first started, I remember standing here and saying to myself, 'That's too small.' But then the wall went up. They did a fantastic job. We're really pleased with the outcome. The staff put a lot of work and energy into the project. I want to thank the board for their vision and many years of planning. There was a lot of work behind the scenes by the staff, volunteers and auxiliary."

George Maffey, co-chair of the steering committee, thanked everyone who donated to the project. Maffey said \$1.85 million has been raised so far and announced they have received verbal notification of a matching grant from the Kresge Foundation of nearly \$200,000. Any benefactors to the hospital of \$1,000 or more will have their names displayed in the lobby.

"It's (the Kresge grant) quite an honor. What they give will make a difference," said Kerry Haley, the hospital's director of community relations.

After the ceremony, tours of the new Emergency Department, Specialty Clinic area and main lobby were given.

"The construction project at ECH will enhance patient care and add new health programs to the community, including cardiac rehabilitation and chemotherapy," Haley said.



The first phase of construction, which is now complete includes a new Emergency Department, main entrance, Veterans' Clinic and specialty physicians' clinic area, which includes a second procedure room.

The new 24-Hour Emergency Department provides more privacy for patients, state-of-the-art patient rooms, a comfortable family waiting area with a workroom for EMTs.

The second phase of the project, now under way, includes internal hospital renovations including a new pharmacy.

"The entire hospital will be easier for patients to navigate," Haley said.

The final phase of construction will be the expansion of the outpatient Physical Therapy Department and the implementation of a cardiac-rehabilitation program.

Elizabethtown Community Hospital, which opened in 1926, is a 25-bed critical-access hospital in Essex County. The hospital has 175 employees, and in 2007 treated almost 700 inpatients and nearly 4,500 patients in the Emergency Department.

The hospital has a network of primary clinics at Elizabethtown, Westport and Wilmington, and maintains a 24-hour Emergency Room and houses a Veterans' Clinic and kidney dialysis unit. It also has a large variety of specialty clinics staffed by board-certified physicians, such as physical therapy, a full-service laboratory and radiology services such as digital mammography, bone density, CT scans and echocardiograms.

In addition to the physical changes, Boula said the hospital has "gone green," as far as the use of cleaning and waxing products, not using Styrofoam products and the energy-efficient lighting, heating and air-conditioning systems.

"We will continue to make ourselves better with state-of-the-art equipment and facilities," Boula said. "Since the ER reopened on Sept. 22 we have been going gangbusters. We have been getting great reports from people."

"The improvements are extremely nice," Lewis Supervisor Dave Blades said after touring the hospital. "It was a long time coming. The results are outstanding."

Elizabethtown Supervisor Noel Merrihew said his mother, Doris, had been at the original groundbreaking in 1967, and he got out of school for the occasion.

"It seems like just yesterday when I got sewn up at Hubbard Hall (the site of the old hospital). This is important, not just for E'town but for all citizens to have a critical-care facility. We're spoiled here."