

NEWS RELEASE

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BOTHWELL REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER ANNOUNCES 'JOURNEY TO A HEALTHIER TOMORROW' PROGRAM

SEDALIA, MO - Bothwell Regional Health Center's Board of Trustees has approved a proposal for the health center to take the first steps on a "Journey to a Healthier Tomorrow," a multi-phase initiative to improve the delivery of health-care services to the community.

The action, taken at the board's regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, December 15, allows the health center to borrow \$18.3 million for construction projects that will span two to three years. Initial plans include construction of a new cancer and cardiovascular center on the east side of the existing health center and construction of a medical office building on the west side of the Bothwell Diagnostic Center-Winchester. The board also approved a separate proposal for renovation of the Women's Health Unit at the health center.

"These projects are important to fulfilling our commitment to provide exceptional care, close to home," said Board President Steve Biermann. "Expanding our cancer and cardiovascular services has been part of our strategic plans for more than three years. It's rewarding to see these plans move into the first stages of becoming reality because we know how important this expansion is for the future of health care in Pettis and Benton counties."

The last physical addition to the hospital was completed in 2000 and was a three-phase, \$20 million project that added the southeast wing. More recent projects have included Bothwell Diagnostic Center-Winchester, Bothwell Health Center-Truman Lake in Warsaw and Bothwell Sleep Center in Sedalia. Construction of these projects was completed without outside financing.

"With current interest rates and market conditions, it is an excellent time for us to move ahead with obtaining financing for these projects," said Chief Executive Officer John Dawes. "We have been very fiscally responsible during the past years, and the health center is in the right position now to begin this expansion."

The health center has been working with ACI Boland, a Kansas City-based architectural firm with extensive experience in health-care facilities, for design of the building additions.

The cancer and cardiovascular center is important because these diseases are the most common health issues for Bothwell's service area, Dawes said. The health center has seen a 23 percent increase in demand for cancer treatment in the past three years, and treatment levels for medical oncology (chemotherapy) have doubled since 2005. The mortality rate due to heart disease is 17 percent higher in Pettis and Benton County than in the rest of the nation.

The medical office building is an integral component in recruiting new physicians to the area. In addition to housing Bothwell OB/Gyn Associates, which is now located on South Ingram, the new building will have lease space for other physicians.

"We are working to recruit at least two new OB/Gyn physicians to the area, and our current facilities on South Ingram are not large enough to accommodate that growth. The layout of the building isn't conducive to providing women's health services or upgrading for new technology," Dawes said. "We also are implementing a comprehensive physician recruitment and retention program because we anticipate a number of needs as more of our physicians reach retirement age."

Recruiting physicians is extremely competitive, and out-state markets like Sedalia are often at a disadvantage, Dawes said.

"Many physician candidates expect to have modern, efficient, easily accessible office space available with lab and diagnostic services on-site. An addition to the Diagnostic Center will provide that," he said.

Because Bothwell Regional Health Center is a city-chartered hospital, the proposal to borrow funds will require City Council approval. The council is expected to consider the proposed effort at its Dec. 21 meeting. While specific costs and timelines are not yet determined, if approved, construction on both projects likely will start in Spring 2010.

Renovation of the women's health unit will include a complete remodeling and the addition of two new labor-delivery-recovery rooms. The work, which will be done mainly by the health center's facilities staff, is expected to begin early next year.

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Bothwell Regional Health Center is a 180-bed regional health center serving west-central Missouri with state-of-the-art technology and comprehensive health and wellness services including surgical, cancer, orthopaedic, endovascular/cardiac, women's health, and therapy services. For more information on Bothwell Regional Health Center and its services, visit the website at www.brhc.org.