

COURIER-JOURNAL

Southern Tier-Auburn Geneva

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Hornell Hospitals Explain Financing of Merger

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Hornell — The Interim Advisory Committee working on the merger of St. James Mercy and Bethesda hospitals has issued an open letter in an attempt to address the "great deal of confusion about how hospital construction is financed," according to the letter.

Signing the letter were the committee members, who are the two hospital administrators, Sister Mary Rene McNiff of St. James and Carl Luger of Bethesda, and three members of each hospital board.

The letter is in response to local persons who have expressed opposition to the merger, many of whom have questioned the source of the funding for the multi-million dollar project that is part of the merger proposal. It includes relocation of several services; and the construction of new facilities for such central services as emergency room, operating rooms, intensive and coronary care, and X-ray.

The open letter explains that such hospital con-

struction is paid for through reimbursement rates, which determine the payments the hospitals receive from Medicaid, Medicare and Blue Cross. The letter states:

"The hospitals submit a project, and, when the state approves of the project, it also approves of the financing. The hospital is then allowed to borrow the money; the state adds to the hospital's Medicaid rate (Medicaid, Medicare and Blue Cross do not pay the bill the hospital sends out. They pay a flat rate per patient per day of care. Many people do not realize this.)

"St. James' 1980 rate is \$131.91 approved to go to \$145. Bethesda's 1980 rate is \$141.84. These are two of the lowest in the state. We are low because neither of us has had major construction in over 10 years."

For comparison, the letter states rates set for other area hospitals which have had construction projects: Noyes Hospital, Dansville, \$159.49; Cuba, \$169.40; and Schuyler Hospital in Montour Falls, \$164.62.

As for the cost to local

persons for the project, the letter notes that "your tax money through Medicaid, your Social Security money through Medicare, and your health insurance premiums have built new hospital construction all over the state. Now it is Hornell's turn. We have an obligation to keep up our health facilities.

"At this time, Hornell has a right to these new facilities and the state's Health Department has an obligation to the health care of the area to see that they are provided. What the state does not intend to approve, however, is construction and renovation for two of each kind of service. This duplication would be unreasonable.

"Perhaps if people understand this better, instead of becoming worried about the consolidation, everyone will begin to rejoice over a local business that is planning a multi-million dollar expansion which will bring money and jobs into the community."

While discussing the letter, Sister Rene commented further, noting that some are questioning

changes that have occurred during the merger discussions. Such changes are to be expected during the discussions, she said, that have extended over several years and deal with many factors. She noted that she feels that such changes would be accepted if they were part of a proposal by a local company, and she asked the public to regard the hospitals' work toward merger in the same light.

She also reported that the hospitals are currently setting up interviews with architects who would do preliminary drawings for the two facilities, with the proposed arrangement of services, and to prepare more specific cost estimates.

And she noted that the proposal to open a 20-bed alcoholism unit at Bethesda is scheduled for review by the Southern Tier Subarea Council May 5. The proposal asks for acute-care reimbursement for the unit. State officials have said that such care has previously been reimbursed at the lower health-related rate. If the acute-care rate is not approved, Sister commented, the proposal will have to be re-evaluated.



Snake-in-Classroom

Ben Trumble holds his pet boa constrictor for the students in a science class at St. Patrick's Junior High School, Elmira, to touch to see that it's not slimy. Trumble, son of Mrs. Nancy Trumble who is the regular teacher for the class, showed slides on various types of snakes and answered questions for the seventh grade classes April 2, during class periods that were too short for many of the students.

Fair to Feature Small Business

Elmira — Ten religious and community groups will participate in an "Alternative and Small Business Fair" Thursday, April 17 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Wisner Park, at Church and Main streets in Elmira.

presented in the First Baptist Church at noon. Paul Whalen, from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University, will speak on worker owned companies as an alternative to plant closings. Those interested are invited to bring a bag lunch; beverages will be provided.

A release from the fair's sponsors notes: "Small businesses come in many shapes and sizes and are a vital, vibrant part of a community. The owner usually lives in the community and therefore has ties and a stake in it. He/she is often known by those who patronize the business or use the services and mutual trust can develop. The small business is the cornerstone of the American economic system."

Participating organizations are: Campaign '80; First Baptist Church, Elmira; First United Church of Christ, Elmira; INFACT, Rochester; League of Women Voters; People Against Nuclear Energy; People for Safe Energy; Project Reach, Wayland; Southern Tier Office of Human Development; and the Elmira City School District Community Education Department.

Coordinators for the event are Giovina Carosco of the Southern Tier Office of Human Development, Keith Dubel and Rob Longwell Grice.

Administrator Honored

Elmira — Arnold Jerome, director of Government Relations and Planning at St. Joseph's Hospital, has been honored by the Southern Tier Health Management Corporation for his efforts to develop harmonious working relationships among local hospitals. A plaque recognizing Jerome's work to shape cooperative services for the Southern Tier Hospitals was presented to him by Robert Jones, Arnot-Ogden Hospital administrator.

Jerome has been president of the Health Management Corporation for the past three years, and has been a member of the corporation's executive committee during that time.

As St. Joseph's representative, he has served on the group's Board of Directors since its inception.

The Southern Tier Health Management Corporation is composed of the seven hospitals in Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties. Through contributions of its members and professional staff, the organization sponsors mutually beneficial programs.

Corporation members are St. Joseph's and Arnot-Ogden in Elmira; Bethesda and St. James in Hornell; Corning Hospital, Corning; Ira Davenport in Bath; and Schuyler Hospital in Montour Falls.

Women's Board Lists Donations

Hornell — St. James Mercy Hospital's Women's Board has announced a list of items it has donated to the hospital. The donations, which cost \$18,332, were made possible by Women's Board fund raising projects, according to Mrs. Salvadore Falzoi and Mrs. John Kelly, board presidents.

The donated items include: two rooms of furniture, two stretcher beds for intensive care, a fetal monitor, a cardiac care monitor, and a stretcher that can be used in X-ray.

Stroke Club To Meet

Elmira — The next meeting of the Twin Tiers Stroke Club will be in St. Joseph's Hospital's Doctors Meeting Room Wednesday, April 16, at 4 p.m.

Seminar to Address Staying Healthy

Elmira — St. Joseph's Hospital will launch its second year of "To Your Health Seminars" Wednesday, April 23, when a group of specialists will present a program titled "How to Stay Well . . . It Depends on Me." The seminar will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Doctors Meeting Room.

The seminars were initiated last year through the efforts of the Community Relations Committee of St. Joseph's Development Council. Mrs. Giuliana Calderone, committee chairperson, said: "This year's program schedule builds upon those conducted last year which drew total attendance of 500 persons. Each of the programs has been so planned as to coincide with seasonal health concerns which could be prevented if individuals were better informed."

Serving on the April 23 panel will be Brian Nagy, MD, psychiatrist; Dominic Romeo, MD, cardiologist; Henry Cesari, DDS; Virginia Kriecht, RN, and Mary Lou Schwenzer, dietitian.

The seminar will set the stage for "Hospital Week

Booths will publicize such things as small farm development, use of solar heat, consumer legislation, voter registration, developing cooperatives, and information on the J. P. Stevens and Nestles boycotts.

Films also will be shown, and a speaker will be

1980," during which the complete state of good health will be featured in displays and exhibits in and around St. Joseph's.

On May 25, the second session of the 1980 series will be "Oh, My Aching Back," presented by John Forrest, MD, an orthopedist.

As summer gets under way, so do an increasing number of accidents, and on June 25, David Kaplan, MD, will present "Emergency the Accident Season Begins."

Three seminars will be presented in the fall. Reservations for the seminars are not necessary, but may be made by contacting the St. Joseph's Community Relations Office, 733-9137.



Godspell

Celebrate Life, the teenage singing group based at St. Mary Our Mother Parish, presented its annual production of "Godspell" in the parish church Palm Sunday before an enthusiastic audience. Above, the 46-member cast during one of the songs in the show, which is a musical adaptation of the Gospel of Matthew.

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