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agreement that the alliance would respect the U.S. bishops' "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services." One key directive is that Catholic hospitals must not only refuse to perform abortions, but also refrain from aligning with any hospital that does so.

"There can be no co-mingling of money with an institution that does abortions," Father Hart said.

Another chief tenet of Catholic health care is service to the poor. Balinsky said that he expects this segment of the population to get adequate health care, even without a Catholic hospital in Rochester.

Balinsky noted that Fidelis Care — which has been on hold in this diocese since its formation in early 1997 — is due to come to the Rochester area shortly. The health maintenance organization serves people on Medicaid and previously uninsured children in low-income families.

Balinsky explained that Unity has signed an agreement with Fidelis, but instituting the program must wait until Strong Health and ViaHealth get similar arrangements in place so that a large enough network is created.

Father Hart also noted that Catholic health care will continue to be made available through ministries of the Sisters of Mercy and Sister of St. Joseph, as well as Catholic Charities agencies.

What of St. Mary's?

The end of the Daughters of Charity's ties with Unity does not mean the end of St. Mary's as a hospital, Putnam emphasized.

Though the birthing and emergency units have left St. Mary's since its alliance with Park Ridge, Putnam noted that the many services of Unity and other agencies still occupy the St. Mary's campus. Among them are brain rehabilitation; psychiatry; outpatient dialysis; walk-in care; nursing facilities; the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program; in-patient hospice; oncology; physician's offices; and dental practices.

"The building has been as full as it has been in a long time," Putnam said.

In addition, Putnam said he hopes the St. Mary's name will be preserved — most notably with the hospital and the St. Mary's Family Birth Place, which opened at Park Ridge in September. According to Father Hart, Ascension retains naming rights.

However, even if the name is preserved, Putnam said that people should not expect a St. Mary's Hospital as they once knew it.

"If your view of a hospital is acute care, intensive care, high tech — that's not what St. Mary's has been the past couple of years," Putnam said.

This evolution, he said, is an often difficult adjustment for patients, employees and the community.

"For a lot of people it's a loss in traditions," Putnam said.

Chief among these losses is the traditional presence of the Daughters of Charity, who have served St. Mary's/Unity for nearly 150 years.

"For the sisters who are here now, and who have served here, we're going through something like death steps," Sister Burns said. "We're grieving our losses."

St. Mary's roots deep in Rochester

St. Mary's Hospital has a long and storied association with health care in Rochester.

The Daughters of Charity, an order of French origin dedicated to serving the poor, came to Rochester in 1857 when it was still part of the Diocese of Buffalo headed by Bishop John Timon. Bishop Timon extended an invitation to the women's religious order, based in Emmitsburg, Md., to come to the city and set up a hospital.

Accompanied by their superior, Sister Hieronymo O'Brien, three sisters came to Rochester and set up the hospital in two converted stables on the corner of West Main and Genesee Streets, where the hospital still stands today. It served 250 patients in its first year and was overseen by Sister O'Brien. Through the years she became a key figure in the city's social work circles, and continually appealed to the public to keep the hospital financially viable.

The Civil War presented the hospital with a formidable challenge, and in 1863, St. Mary's signed a contract with the federal government that made the Catholic institution an official government hospital. Thousands of soldiers — including 650 in one day — were brought to St. Mary's for treatment during the war.

In the next few decades, St. Mary's continued to grow, purchasing a farm in Gates that supplied the patients' food needs from 1865 to 1940. St. Mary's set up its own nursing school in 1892, and trained nurses for 79 years until the school closed in 1971 amidst a nationwide trend of moving nursing schools away from hospitals onto college campuses.

In 1896, St. Mary's set up its own barn for horse-drawn ambulances, which it used until 1914, when the hospital started using motorized ambulances. A surgical wing was established at the hospital in 1897.

By the 1940s, the old buildings that had served the hospital for decades were in need of renovation, and in 1943, a new 300-bed hospital opened at the same location.

In the last two decades, St. Mary's established several satellite offices throughout



File photo

An Oct. 13, 1976, *Courier* photo identified Sister DeChantal, St. Mary's administrator, Mrs. Raymond Porter, left, Seton branch chairman, and Mrs. Larry Stide, Seton Sale chairman, grouped around a cardiac echo unit used at St. Mary's to help diagnose cardiac problems.

the urban and suburban area, and provided health care to homeless men, women in children in various shelters and on the street. This outreach work earned the hospital the Foster G. McGaw Prize for community service from the American Hospital Association and the Baxter Foundation in 1995.

A brain-injury rehabilitation unit that has become nationally renowned for its work and research was opened at St. Mary's in 1989, and has since served hundreds of patients.

Joining a growing nationwide trend of hospitals forming new alliances to stay financially viable, St. Mary's officially united with the Park Ridge Health System in 1997. The new alliance was called the Unity Health System.

Several changes took place at both St. Mary's and Park Ridge campuses under the new system, including the moving of St. Mary's obstetrical-gynecological services to

Park Ridge, and the closing in September this year of St. Mary's emergency department. Unity also opened a nursing home facility for the elderly in August this year on the grounds of St. Mary's Hospital. The new unit serves more than 100 residents.

Compiled with information from *St. Mary's Hospital and The Diocese of Rochester in America 1868-1993* by Father Robert F. McNamara.

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