

Cape hospital dedicates new medical plaza, garage

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By SCOTT MOYERS ~ Southeast Missourian

When Southeast Missouri Hospital first opened its doors in 1928, the dozen or so Cape Girardeau physicians kept offices in their homes.

That hasn't been the case for decades. Still, it's better for everyone, hospital president and CEO Jim Wenthe says, if those doctors are located closer to hospitals.

That's why more than a decade ago, Southeast began considering that as an option, culminating on Sunday with the dedication of its new \$16.5 million, four-story office building and 309-car parking garage.

"More and more, we see hospitals of this size and scope of services with a medical office building attached to the facility," Wenthe said. "It creates efficiencies for physicians, and it's a convenience for patients. If a physician orders certain procedures or tests to assist him or her in a patient's diagnosis and treatment plan, those services are readily available to the patient."

Sunday's ceremony also was held to dedicate the medical plaza lobby in memory of Charles L. Hutson, who helped guide the hospital through more than three decades of growth. Hutson served four years as chairman of the hospital's board of trustees and was a board member for nearly a quarter-century.

The completed 75,000-square-foot office building -- designed by the Webster Grove, Mo., architectural firm of Pansing, Nolan, Matlock, Ltd. -- is occupied by an MRI suite, an outpatient pharmacy, a dialysis center, neurology, oncology, cardiology, cardiovascular surgery, neurosurgery, gastrointestinal and family-practice suites. The building is 100 percent occupied.

Construction began in 2003. Brian Pansing, the principal architect, said the new presence on Broadway provides additional exposure to generate further community awareness of the hospital.

"The building site was unique," he said. "With more than a 50-foot grade differential between the first floor of the new medical plaza and the existing hospital, the architectural team needed to create a design that was functional and appealing to patients and their families."

The solution includes a pedestrian bridge at the top floor of the new office building to connect it with the lowest level of the adjacent cancer center, Pansing said. The cancer center is connected to the main hospital via a tunnel under Lacey Street.

As part of the hospital's expansion, SWT Design was commissioned by the hospital to develop a landscape master plan for its entire 25-acre campus. The master plan addressed the overall image of the hospital, including streetscapes, open space and a "healing garden."



An open house Sunday at the new Southeast Medical Plaza, 1723 Broadway, included the fourth-floor pedestrian bridge that connects to Southeast Missouri Hospital. (Fred Lynch)

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