















1957 - 2022





2022 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Rated









A 65 year legacy of high-quality healthcare to the community

By Melissa R. Collum

In April 1955, Vincent and Viola Polodna donated the land for the hospital. At the groundbreaking ceremony, Viola stated the following regarding the founding and development of the hospital,"... we'll prove to the people of the community what can be done if we all work together." Crossing Rivers Health, formally Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital, was incorporated in August 1954. This incorporation enabled the Hospital Association to form a board of directors and raise funds.

The Prairie du Chien community and the Hospital Association had an uphill battle raising funds to build the hospital. In March 1956, the community voted on a bond to help fund the hospital. The bond of \$70,000 split the community in its support of the hospital. The commu-

nity vote on March 1955, came back with 916 Yes to 439 No in favor of the referendum. The total cost of the original hospital was \$450,000. With the bond's passage, the association received \$180,000 to help build the first community hospital.

Several com-

mittees were formed to help with the fundraising for the hospital, including the Hospital Auxiliary, now known as Part-



First baby born at Memorial Hospital

On July 9, 1957, Jane Marie Stram, 7 lbs, 8 oz. was born and is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clement L. Stram of Prairie du Chien.

history on Partners of Crossing Rivers Health, see pg. 8). "Before there was a hospital". More than \$100,000 was given

by private donors and the greater Prairie du Chien community. One of the more unique activities was the "Buy a Brick for a Dime" drive. In November 1955. the Women's Auxiliary held a fund drive by collecting dimes at 15 local businesses. In the first two weeks,

enough funds were raised to purchase 248 bricks.

On July 8, 1957, Prairie du Chien ners of Crossing Rivers Health. (For more Memorial Hospital officially opened its

doors with 40 beds. There were a total of 29 staff members: four registered nurses, four licensed practical nurses, four cooks, one maid, one volunteer receptionist, one lab tech, one x-ray tech, one office manager, and one person in accounts receivable. In the early years, members of the Women's Auxiliary could be found working as maids to assist in the cleaning duties of the hospital. There were three doctors on staff; Drs. Thomas Farrell, Verne Epley, and Herman Shapiro.

In the first year of operation, there were 898 admissions to the hospital and 320 births. The average cost of a semiprivate room was \$12, and the total cost of a stay, on average, was \$187.

In 1965, the passage of Medicare and Medicaid programs changed the ability of those over the age of 65 and lowincome patients to access healthcare. Shortly following, the implementation of the Medicare/Medicaid programs accounted for over 60% of the hospital patient days. This resulted in the hospital being at almost constant capacity.

In 1969, the hospital determined that it was necessary to construct a 42 bed addition. The project was projected to cost 1.25 million dollars. Through the process of applying for additional funding from bonds totaling \$836,000 from the community and Crawford County. In exchange for the funding, Crawford County took ownership of the hospital until 1987, when the bonds were to be repaid. The addition was completed in 1972, increasing the total number of beds to 82. Along with the addition of beds, the facility added or expanded the emergency room, therapy and clinical

laboratory, and medical imaging. Additionally, non-medical areas enhanced by the expansion were the cafeteria, coffee shop, lobby, offices, and the main en-

While the addition was underway, the hospital realized the need for acute care and created the first Intensive Care Unit by converting one hospital room. By 1973, the ICU was expanded to encompass three rooms. In the 1979/80 hospital expansion, a specific unit was developed.

The 1970s were a time when the hospital proved it was leading the way in providing excellent service and care. In 1975, the hospital earned its first accreditation from the Joint Commission. This national accreditation means that a hospital complies with the highest national standards for safety and quality of care



First doctors on staff

Drs. Thomas Farrell and Verne Epley were two of the first doctors on staff (circa 1957-60).

See 65 YEAR LEGACY cont. on pg. 3



This building will stand as a living

memory of the selfless efforts of the

entire community, whose citizens

gave of their time, money, and moral

support to carry through this, our fin-

Author unknown

est example of united effort.

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65 year legacy continued from page 2



In 1981, known as the "Year of the Bridge," employees had to use private boats, the ferry and a wind sled to cross the river to and from work because the Mississippi River Bridge was declared unsafe.

and is committed to continually improving patient care.

The Rural Family Practice Residency program was established in 1975. The purpose of this organization is to sustain health professionals' education in rural places through mutual encouragement, peer learning, practice improvement, and the delivery of technical expertise, all in support of a quality rural workforce. The program expanded on the concept of family medicine. Family medicine doctors received specialized training in diagnosing and treating the entire range of medical conditions that affect all family members. Since family medicine doctors focus on the whole family's needs, they often receive training in pediatrics, geriatrics, obstetrics, and gynecology. They

offer a wide range of urgent care, sick, and preventive care services.

In May 1978, the Home Health Care agency was opened on behalf of the Crawford County Board of Supervisors by the hospital. The state of Wisconsin provided a \$16,000 grant to help facilitate the implementation and running of the program. The agency provided part-time and intermittent skilled nursing and other therapeutic services on a visiting basis to persons in their homes. The agency was one of 102 in the state in operation in 1979. In the first year of operation, the agency admitted 98 patients to the program and made 2,110 home visits. In 1980 there were an additional 51 patients in the program, and there were 2,423 home visits.

The Hospice program began in June of 1980 and was the first of its kind in a rural area. In its first year of service, it had a total of 25 patients. Fourteen of these patients received services in their homes, six in the hospice unit, and eight within the hospital setting. The average cost per day was \$154, and the average stay in hospice was 12.5 days.

In 1986 the senior meals program, known as the Congregate Meal Service, began via the hospital. The program provided mid-day meals, Monday through Friday, including holidays for community members over the age of 60. The service was offered in various sites in Crawford County, with each site providing activities such as games, blood pressure screening, and legal services.

The hospital became one of the first eye banks in 1986. Working with the Wisconsin Eye Bank and the Lions Club, three staff members were trained in the process of eye enucleation, or the process of carefully removing eyes, after a person's death. The eyes are used for transplantation or research.

With the purchase of St. Gabriel Convent, in 1987, the hospital created a Community-Based Residential Facility. The hospital operated the facility as an independent living facility for up to 20 residents. The facility's basement was used for hospital storage, and there were plans to house a daycare on the first floor.

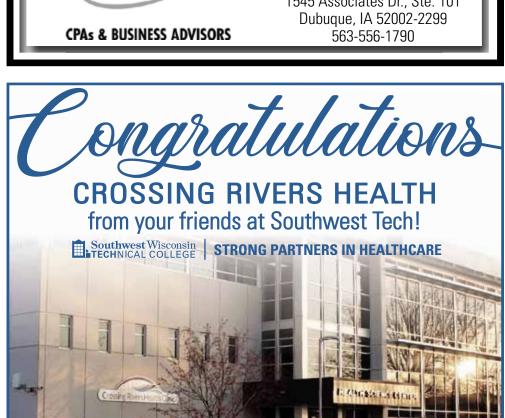
The Hemodialysis Unit was added in 1986. The hospital library was renovated to create the space. Throughout the spring of 1986, three nurses took training in LaCrosse. In the first year of use, as many as eight patients used the service. At one point, up to six patients per week were dialyzing. Within a year, the service was expanded, and another room was added on to allow for two more stations.

The groundbreaking for the 1989 outpatient facility was held on September 6, 1989. The \$500,000 project was built to hold the new or expanded departments of Physical and Respiratory Therapy, Stress Testing, and Audiology. Included in the cost of the building the facility was the ability to complete an update of the heating and ventilation system of the main building.

The Walter Schmidt Independent Living and Wee Care Child Day Care Center were opened by the hospital in 1992. The concept was to put a child care center attached to Independent Living. The program's vision was to enable the children to interact with the Independent Living residents. On opening day, May 4, 1992, 18 children were enrolled, and within two months, the number had risen to 33 children. In the annual hospital report of that year, the program's success was summarized as a "truly unique combination facility for the young and the

See 65 YEAR LEGACY cont. on pg. 4













MICHAEL LENZENDORF

940 S. Marquette Rd., Prairie du Chien, WI 53821 Phone 608-326-6445 | Email Mlenzen1@amfam.com

65 year legacy continued from page 3



Advancements in technology, beginning in the 1980s - 90s, brought Computed Tomography to Prairie du Chien Memorial's Medical Imaging Department.

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young at heart."

In 1994 the awards and accolades for the hospital's work continued as they were awarded the Global Vision Community Outreach Award. The award provides recognition, financial support, and public awareness of a community health initiative or project which successfully addresses a documented community health need through creativity, innovation, partnership, and collaboration. The award was in recognition of the Family

Resource Center, which was established in 1990. It was a partnership of community resources designed to provide specialty parenting education for parents and children from birth to age three. The program expanded in its first year to include school-aged children.

The hospital and other community organizations were awarded the opportunity to participate in the Community Health Intervention Partnerships (CHIPs). The hospital was one of two rural sites in

the U.S.A. chosen to participate. The focus was to partner with other community organizations to improve healthcare and better serve the community. A part of the program was to perform a community survey from which the hospital learned that the community had rated services at over 90%. Additionally, the hospital learned that the lack of adequate primary care providers was one of the needs identified by the community. Out of this survey, the hospital responded with the development of the Mississippi Valley Health Partnership.

In May 1997, the hospital started the Urgent Care program. The hospital wanted to best serve their patients and ensure they received care when needed. When patients go to Urgent Care, they are triaged by a nurse who determines the needed level of care. This process saves the patient over half the cost of treatment.

The advent of new technology brought a CT scanner to the Medical Imaging Department in 2000. The scanner was faster and more efficient than the current technology in the department. Shortening diagnosis time, the scanner was able to perform real-time capture with the teleimaging system the hospital had in place. The device also meant that patients did not have to travel long distances to do these procedures.

As of October 3, 2003, the hospital converted to a Critical Access Hospital (CAH). The CAH designation is designed

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Harold W. Brown, CEO, of Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital (1973-2008) received the first Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Rural Health Association in 2004.

to reduce the financial vulnerability of rural hospitals and improve access to healthcare by keeping essential services in rural communities. None of the services changed when the hospital received this designation. At the time of its implementation, it was the hope of the hospital administration that because of the change in financial obligations related to the CAH status, more funds could be

See 65 YEAR LEGACY cont. on pg. 5



65 year legacy continued from page 4

It's not the bricks and mortar that

tell the story of this organization; the

story lives within all of these people

that have contributed to this long

- Connie Achenbach,

retired Chief Operating Officer

history of service.

used to support and expand services.

With the installation of a CPSI computer system in 2005, the hospital was on its way to having an integrated electronic medical records system. The system links medical records with materials management and financial systems, as well as the lab and pharmacy departments. The system would enable physicians to check medications, imaging, and diagnostic results and write orders.

In June 2009, a portion of the hospital's 1980 strategic plan to provide alternative Living for seniors and long-

term care came to fruition with the opening of the new Prairie Mason and Bluff Haven facilities. Prairie Mason began as a 64 bed facility offering skilled nursing care. Bluff Haven, a residential care facility, has 24 units. Bluff Haven's memory care unit has six studio units.

Renovations in 2010 brought more awards and recognition to the hospital. Forty-two solar thermal collectors were added to the roof of the hospital. The collectors created between 1,500 – 2,100 gallons of hot water a day for

hospital use. At the same time, the facility switched to water-saving toilets and updated heating, air-conditioning, and water systems to be more energy efficient and recapture lost energy. For their 'green' remodeling projects, the hospital was recognized by the National Rural Health Association.

An innovative program was started in 2011 with the hospital's athletic trainers and Prairie du Chien, River Ridge, and Wauzeka High Schools. The program has members of the hospital's athletic training staff working with athletes and

coaches at each of these schools to implement the ImPACT program, Immediate Post Concussion Assessment, and Cognitive Testing. The purpose of ImPACT is to evaluate and treat head injuries.

In September 2011, the Board of Directors approved

the building of a new hospital. The decision was based on the need to provide a facility that is designed to be flexible and adaptive as new technologies are adopted, and patient care needs change. The goal is to implement evidence-based design features to improve patient safety,

Dr. Mike 58 years in medicine

Dr. Michael
"Dr. Mike" Garrity
(circa 1961) had
a 58 year career
in medicine in
Prairie du Chien.
He worked with
the University of
Wisconsin-Madison
Medical School to
create a residency
program in
Prairie du Chien
to enhance
patient care.



reduce the risk of infections and improve healing. The projected completion of the new hospital in 2014 was \$50,000,000. Construction began on the new hospital in June 2013.

In May 2014, Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital announced that it would change its name and tagline. The tagline, "We're big enough to help you ... small enough to care," which was last changed in 1988, became "Your bridge to wellness." The hospital's name was changed to Crossing Rivers Health. Each part of the new name has a relevant meaning. "Crossing Rivers" both describe the health system's location - at the confluence of the Mississippi River and the Wisconsin River – and its service to patients on both sides of the rivers in two states, Wisconsin and Iowa. By changing the name from "Hospital" to "Medical Center," the organization better describes the diverse array of services it provides.

The new tagline, "Your bridge to wellness," also emphasizes the wellness component of care. The Crossing Rivers Health staff of professionals and providers also serve as bridges, in a sense, providing personal connections to care with compassion and joy. With services that span the entire course of one's life – from birth to end of life – Crossing Rivers Health bridges a complete continuum of care for the whole family.

The Crossing Rivers Health name and brand have taken root in the new medical center, which opened its doors on June 11, 2015. The Medical Center was thoughtfully planned and specifically de-

signed to create a healing environment that supports the caregivers as they deliver high-quality care for generations to come.

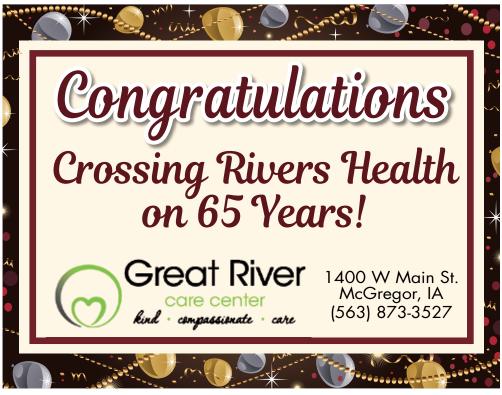
Though numerous accomplishments and milestones have occurred in the past eight years, the new medical center is certainly a source of pride for many. The aforementioned milestones are not all-inclusive, but serve as a summary of the historical highlights that have brought this community hospital to where it is to-day.

"Taking a moment to pause and think about the work that takes place in an organization like this...it truly revolves around the very lives and well-being of our community members and our patients," shared Chris Brophy, Chief Executive Officer at Crossing Rivers Health. "This organization is, and has always been, the sum of many parts that ultimately equate to mission, purpose, and people. It's truly people caring for people."

Brophy added, "Throughout this milestone anniversary year, it's been great to reflect upon the Medical Staff, community leaders, employees, and volunteers who contributed countless hours and efforts to make this organization successful over all this time. When you consider the individual contributions and sacrifices over the course of 65 years, the impact cannot be quantified."

"As the current CEO of Crossing Rivers Health, I feel privileged to lead an organization with such a rich history, and I'm proud of the people who continue to build upon this legacy."







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Integrated care; a new chapter in our healthcare history

With the opening of the new and expanded Crossing Rivers Health Clinic in the spring of 2023, the organization will soon be moving into a new era of primary care delivery.

The expansion will not only allow for increased patient access, but will also make space for behavioral health and primary care providers to be located together in the clinic. This close proximity will allow the teams to work closely together to provide individualized, wholeperson care, and will carry Crossing Rivers Health into a new, exciting chapter in the organization's 65-year history.

Medicine and technology have seen incredible advancements since Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital opened its doors in 1957. Those were the days

before computers were commonplace, organ and tissue transplants were just emerging, and shared patient rooms were the norm.

Many may fondly recall the days of the Farrell Clinic, Himrich's Snyder Drugs, and when Dr. Clifford Smith made regular house calls. For many years, Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital was solely an inpatient, acute care hospital. Over time, the hospital diversified the services it offered to the communities, growing to provide rehabilitation, home health, hospice, child care, assisted living, and many more services rural hospitals didn't typically provide.

Fast forward to January of 2014, when Crossing Rivers Health partnered with Great River Medical Clinic – Dr. Mark and



Construction continues on the 18,000 sq. ft. clinic addition which adjoins directly to the north end of the Crossing Rivers Health Medical Center.

Dr. Ann Grunwald. The partnership was formed in anticipation of the doctors' retirement, and in hopes of continuing to serve the primary care needs of area residents. The busy practice precipitated the need for a new, larger clinic, and Crossing Rivers Health opened its new Clinic in Prairie du Chien in July, 2014. The building consisted of 6,000 square feet of clinical office space and helped meet the community's need for increased ac-

cess and continuity of care.

Since 2019, the Crossing Rivers Health Clinic visits have steadily increased by more than 25 percent. The clinic expansion, which began in the spring of 2021, will add 12,000 square feet and bring the total clinic footprint to 18,000 square feet. Highlights include better integration with behavioral health, social work,

See **INTEGRATED CARE** cont. on pg. 7



In April of 2022, clinic staff and providers proudly scooped the first shovels of dirt kicking off the construction project which is anticipated to be completed in the spring of 2023.



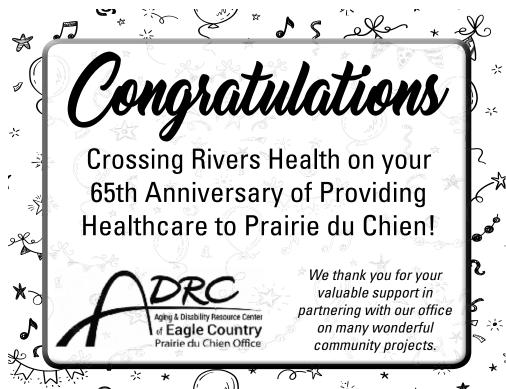
We congratulate Crossing Rivers on 65 years of being a leader in providing patient care with advanced medical technology!



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Integrated care continued from page 6



A re-use plan for the current Prairie du Chien clinic space is now under development. This plan entails relocating some services currently housed within the medical center, allowing for the potential expansion of services.

lab, and imaging. Access to medical center services will be much more convenient for clinic patients, improving patient wayfinding, process efficiencies, patient privacy, and allowing for needed group therapy and space for fetal monitoring.

Chris Brophy, Chief Executive Officer at Crossing Rivers Health, said, "Looking to the future, we needed to envision how we will deliver integrated care." Brophy added, "Crossing Rivers Health is looking ahead at the healthcare delivery model from a fresh perspective. We are learning from what has worked, collaborating with our community partners, and adapting to the needs of our community

members and patients. Incorporating best practices will help us to attain our goal of the best outcome for every patient, every time."

Maria Mathis, Crossing Rivers Health Clinic Director, shared, "We are building the new clinic to meet the expanding needs of our communities. We look forward to inviting our patients and the communities we serve to a grand opening event for the new Crossing Rivers Health Clinic in Prairie du Chien in the spring of 2023."

View a time-lapse of the construction project and learn more about the new Crossing Rivers Health Clinic at crossingrivers.org/clinic.

Crossing Rivers Health Fennimore Clinic

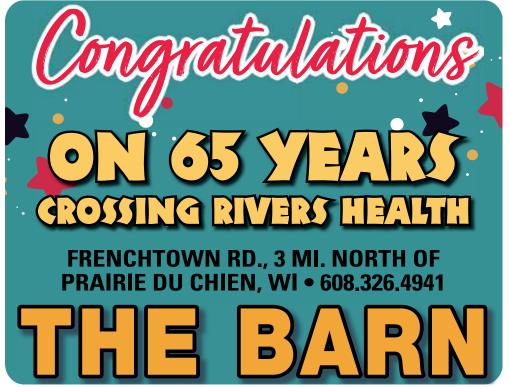
At the same time as the opening of the clinic in Prairie du Chien in 2014, Crossing Rivers Health partnered with Southwest Wisconsin Technical College to open a clinic in the Health Sciences Building on the SWTC campus. This provided an additional primary care option not only to Fennimore area residents, but also a convenient option for the college students and faculty.



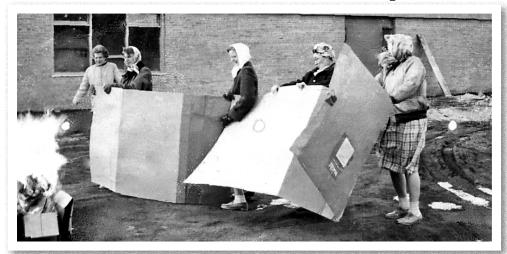








Before there was a hospital...there were hospital volunteers



The Partners Auxiliary volunteers rolled up their sleeves and helped to ready the hospital, inside and out, for opening day.

Partners of Crossing Rivers Health was established in 1955, and remains among the longest-standing volunteer organizations in our community. The Partners, known early on as the Hospital Auxiliary, organized to support a new hospital anticipated to be built in Prairie du Chien. Their mission has been to promote a closer bond of understanding and friendly cooperation between the community and the hospital, to give extra comforts and cheer to patients, and to aid the administration through volunteer services.

Auxiliary members rolled up their sleeves even before the hospital opened, cleaning and readying the fixtures and building for the opening day. Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital opened its doors to the first patient on July 8, 1957. Over the years, as new services were

added or existing ones expanded, the volunteers worked together with hospital staff to meet patient needs. An array of fund drives proved successful, including rummage sales, sock hops and galas, theatrical performances, card parties, bake sales, cookbooks, flea markets, and dinner parties. Their fundraisers and programs have touched every department with volunteers, needed equipment, education, and teaching aides.

The old-fashioned can-do attitude is evident as the Partners of Crossing Rivers Health remain a vital part of the local healthcare team, even today. The efforts and dedication of Partners of Crossing Rivers Health have remained strong, with a major focus is the operation of the hospital gift shop as well as scholarships that invest in the future of healthcare. The

volunteer group stays current on healthcare issues, participating in regional and state advocacy efforts. Their efforts and programs have received accolades over the years, with the most recent being the Wisconsin Award for Volunteer Excel"Volunteering gives me purpose. I love to help people in any way I can." She added, "When you volunteer, you get back more than you give."

Volunteers play an important role at Crossing Rivers Health by adding a per-



Several Partners members recently attended the Partners of the Wisconsin Hospital Association Convention. At the event, the group was honored with a Wisconsin Award for Volunteer Excellence.

lence, received in October of 2022.

The organization is a member of the state Partners of Wisconsin Hospital Association, joining the ranks of more than 50 hospital volunteer organizations and almost 9,000 members in Wisconsin.

Volunteering at Crossing Rivers Health is a rewarding way to enhance the service provided to our patients, families, visitors, and staff. Ruth Skelly, retired RN and long-time Partners member shared,

sonal touch to interactions with patients, loved ones, and visitors; and by giving their time and talents to plan and implement projects and community programs. Anyone interested in volunteering or becoming a Partners of Crossing Rivers Health member may learn more at crossingrivers.org/volunteer or call Samantha Matern, Volunteer Coordinator, at 608.357.2621.



The future of rural communities is dependent on the health of their residents, and the health of their residents is dependent on convenient access to quality and compassionate healthcare. CROSSING RIVERS HEALTH has and will continue to provide innovative and comprehensive healthcare to Prairie du Chien and the surrounding region.

CROSSING RIVERS HEALTH, as one of the City's largest employers, is also a major economic engine for the community while playing a significant role in attracting business and industry to the area.

The Mayor and Common Council of the City of Prairie du Chien join in celebrating CROSSING RIVERS HEALTH'S 65TH ANNIVERSARY. We commend CROSSING RIVERS HEALTH on 65 years of caring for the health of the community and for making Prairie du Chien a great place in which to live, work, and visit.

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