

To the Community:

The Medical Staff at Steele Memorial Medical Center feels privileged to be able to take an opportunity to address our community on what we feel are important issues that affect all of us. Every one of our health care providers has made the decision to practice medicine in a smaller community because we feel we can make a positive impact on our patients, many of whom are friends and neighbors. There are obviously some tradeoffs in providing medical care, as well as receiving medical care, in a smaller hospital, but to us, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

Steele Memorial Medical Center is staffed by a group of dedicated employees whose primary goal is to provide excellent and compassionate healthcare. The housekeeping, food services, clinic, maintenance, information technology, medical records, business office, physical therapy and sports medicine, laboratory, radiology, respiratory therapy emergency department, nursing, and surgical departments all have employees who are devoted and strive to provide the best service that they can. They are proud of what they do and we, the Medical Staff, are proud of how well they do it. We are fortunate to have them to support the care that we provide.

The Medical Center Board of Directors, the Administration, and the Senior Management have made great strides over the past four years to improve the services and the financial stability of the facility. These have been a cooperative effort with the Medical Staff; no major decisions have been made without our input. Besides the full time Family Practice, Obstetrics and Gynecological, General Surgical, Orthopedic Surgery services, and an Emergency Department staffed by physicians 24 hours a day; the Administration has brought in visiting physicians who provide cardiology, radiology, psychiatry, pulmonology, podiatric, vascular, and dermatological services. We will also soon have hematology and oncology services to provide chemotherapy, and possibly a urologist in the near future. In addition, every financial measure of how well the hospital is doing, even in the difficult current economic environment, has greatly improved under current management.

The Board and Administration has invested in our Medical Center by continuing to upgrade and improve the technology that we offer. Our 64-slice CT scanner can rapidly identify internal injuries sustained by patients who come to our Emergency Department. It can be used to perform angiography studies to check blood vessels for blood clots and the heart for blockages and calcium deposits. At least three lives have likely been saved in the past year through detection of coronary artery blockages in individuals who had no symptoms and who had bypass surgery after their testing here. Our Computerized Radiology system allows us to have the radiologists in Idaho Falls read our X-rays immediately instead of days later. Our DEXA scanner detects osteoporosis so that patients can be treated before they break a bone, our new ultrasound unit shows us unborn babies and allows biopsies without surgery, our sleep lab can diagnose sleep disorders, and our cardiac rehabilitation program helps our heart patients get back to living their lives normally. Low cost heart calcium scoring, carotid artery screening for blockage, and mammograms can all be done at a patient's request without even

having to see a doctor first. Our hospital is one of the most advanced in the United States in implementation of electronic medical records, and this summer we will begin installing the EMR at the clinic. We anticipate continued improvement in the quality of care as this progresses.

The Steele Memorial Foundation has been revitalized over the past several years. It raised \$36,000 in 2007 for the purchase of a fetal monitor for our labor and delivery suite. It raised \$86,000 in 2008 for the purchase of the computerized radiography system. It is currently raising up to \$80,000 for the purchase of a wireless cardiac biotelemetry system in 2009. These technologies benefit all of us. The Foundation Board is composed of a dedicated group of prominent Lemhi County citizens who appreciate the great support that we have received from the public, and who have plans for even bigger and better efforts for our community.

Despite all of this, there are still some injuries and diseases that we cannot or should not treat in Salmon. We do not, as yet, have an Intensive Care Unit and we don't have critical care physicians, such as cardiologists or internists to staff it. Many people with heart attacks or serious injuries have to be stabilized here and then transferred for definitive care. Certain types of surgical care, such as spine surgery, neurosurgery, and urology are not available in Salmon at this time. Some medical issues such as renal dialysis and radiation therapy require very expensive equipment that can not be justified here. Some things that we could do here we don't because the great expense for the equipment could not be justified by the small number of patients treated.

Because of these issues, there may be a perception among some that many patients go "over the hill" for services that are available in Salmon. We can find little evidence that this is true. In fact, our statistics would suggest that just the opposite is true; fewer people are going "over the hill." If we compare 2004 with 2008, the time period since the new hospital opened, new medical providers arrived, and a new Administration and Board provided direction, we find the following. Deliveries of babies increased from 15 to 67, surgical procedures increased from 316 to 666, inpatient days increased from 793 to 1285, Emergency Department visits increased from 2519 to 3243, number of X-ray department studies increased from 5451 to 8530, number of clinic visits increased from 13,015 to 20,343, and number of laboratory tests increased from 51,600 to 61,660. We are sure that some people receive some of their medical care at other locations, either for services we don't provide, because they have a doctor who had taken care of them in the past, or commonly because they are referred to those other locations by one of our providers. We feel good about this because it suggests that more and more people are choosing to receive their health care in Salmon.

This is not to say that we can't do better. Soon new initiatives will start to be implemented at both the clinic and hospital that are designed to significantly improve customer service and decrease waiting times for appointments and care. The business office is continuing to work to improve our billing and collection procedures and to make our medical bills easier to

understand. We are recruiting another Family Practice physician. We will assist the Veterans Administration with opening a clinic in Salmon if they elect to proceed with that project.

Steele Memorial Medical Center is a valuable asset in our community. Besides providing the services discussed above, it has a major positive economic impact on the County. It employs more than 150 people who receive above average wages and benefits. The total amount of wages and benefits paid last year was over \$10 million. We suspect a large amount of that was spent right here in Salmon at local business. The Medical Center also uses local vendors and business for services purchased whenever feasible.

The Medical Staff feels that we have a facility that we are proud to be part of, and feel that our staff and community should be proud of as well. We thank you for the trust that you have placed in us.

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