

Hospital makes money for second straight year

Doug Flanagan/Post-Register
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It appears as if the Quincy Valley Medical Center has made a profit for a second consecutive year.

According to preliminary financial reports, the center made \$270,383 in 2009 after making about \$26,000 in December. The center made \$284,721 in 2008, the first time in years it had finished in the black.

At Monday's meeting of Grant County Public Hospital District No. 2 board of commissioners, board chairman Don Condit gave credit to hospital administrator Mehdi Merred and the facility's employees for the turnaround.

ADVERTISEMENT "In a five-year period beginning in 2005, we've gone from having an operating loss of \$936,000 to having a net income of \$270,000," Condit said. "In that time, expenses went up 18 percent, and revenues went up 31 percent. You should congratulate yourselves. You all had a hand in it. This wouldn't have happened if you didn't have your oars in the water and make this thing go. I'm not suggesting that we don't have more work to do, but we've made a good dent. We've made a conscious, serious effort to control expenses. The numbers speak miles about the work you've done."

Financial officer Ken Kiehn said the year-end numbers didn't yield any big surprises compared to the budget the hospital had made at the beginning of the year.

"I'm quite pleased with the year," he said. "I'm happy with the job the department heads and the managers did to enable us to get into this position."

Merred also noted the rate of employee turnover at the hospital went down in 2009.

"We're developing an ability to keep committed people here," he said. "That's probably related to (our ability to be profitable) and vice-versa."

According to a report issued by

human resources director Alene Walker, the turnover rate was 30 percent for the year, but the rate for full-time employees was 20 percent.

"That's the number you really want to look at, at the end of the year," she said. "The per diem rate (50 percent in 2009) will turn over fairly regularly."

To reward the administrator for "generally performing above the expectations for the employment year of 2009," the board voted to approve a raise in Merred's salary to \$150,000 for 2010. In 2009 his base pay was \$115,000, and he received a \$25,000 bonus.

"I think it's well deserved," board member Darryl Van Dyke told Merred. At that point the board members and hospital employees in attendance gave Merred a round of applause.

- The board elected Anthony Gonzalez as chairman for 2010 and Randy Zolman as secretary. Gonzalez had spent 2009 as the secretary.

- Merred said one of the hospital's areas of focus in 2010 will be patient and employee safety. To that end, the hospital staff has already undergone fire safety training earlier this month under the tutelage of Duane Van Beek.

Merred also said he'd like to bring in a school safety consultant from the North Central Educational Service District, Bruce Merighi, to assist with disaster and mass casualty planning.

"We'd like to develop procedures and align our resources with other agencies," Merred said.

- Merred said another goal will be to begin the implementation of electronic medical records into the hospital and clinic.

"It's basically a paperless application," he said. "Patients will be able to have access to records from anywhere, which provides advantages for us and better patient care for them. It's a more efficient way of providing healthcare. It will probably take a year to fully implement the system, and we might see some struggles in that time, but in years two and three we'll start to see some major improvements."

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