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Hospital to purchase new bone density machine

Doug Flanagan/Post-Register
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At the beginning of Monday's meeting of Grant County Public Hospital District No. 2 board of commissioners, newly-elected chairman Anthony Gonzales asked Quincy Valley Medical Center marketing director Michele Wurl to deliver a piece of good news the hospital has been waiting a long time to hear.

Wurl announced that the Quincy Valley Hospital Foundation has completed its goal of raising \$68,000 for the purchase of a new bone density machine for the hospital.

About \$22,000 of that total came from a USDA rural facilities grant, Wurl said. The rest of the funds were raised from foundation events such as last year's Spring Swing golf tournament and Red Wine and Blues.

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"This took over a year (to accomplish)," Wurl said. "We're moving as quickly as we can (to purchase the machine), and we're up and running. We'll keep you apprised of the progress. We're pretty excited about it."

Wurl said this year's foundation events will raise funds to replenish the pool that was depleted with the purchase of the bone density machine.

A bone density test measures the strength and density of bones as patients approach menopause and, when the test is repeated sometime later, can help determine how quickly a patient is losing bone mass and density.

A bone density test is not currently available in the hospital's service area. Currently, patients must travel to Wenatchee or Moses Lake to receive the service.

"The earlier you have your bone density tested, the sooner you can assess your risk of fracture due to osteoporosis and begin to preserve your bone strength," according to a fact sheet about bone density scans on the hospital's Web site.

"A new bone density scanner would provide a needed service locally, thus reducing patient travel times, greatly alleviating wait times for patients, and providing a service to all local providers they desperately need and have requested for years."

- Hospital administrator Mehdi Merred announced he had received a letter of resignation/retirement from chief financial controller Ken Kiehn.

Kiehn has worked at the hospital for the last four years.

"Thank you, Ken, for your expertise and commitment," Merred said. "We've been profitable over the last two years, and we couldn't have done that without you setting the budget in place with precision and professionalism. We'll miss your expertise. You had a great ability to translate Medicare (terminology) into English. It will be difficult to find somebody who does it as well."

Kiehn returned the warm feelings.

"I've had a good time here and made a lot of friends," he said. "I won't be going far, though. I'm not moving away or anything. I'm just going to be playing a lot of golf."

- The hospital lost money in January, but Kiehn didn't sound too overly concerned.

"There's nothing in the budget that's a major surprise," he said. "Due to the cyclical nature of these things, we know that the first of the year can be tough. However, we did do better than last January. We'll just work to control our expenses."

The hospital lost \$20,704 in January; it had budgeted for a profit of about \$14,000.

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