

Hospital makes money in February

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The winter months are usually the Quincy Valley Medical Center's leanest in terms of financial profitability, which makes the fact that the hospital made money in February — more than it had budgeted for, in fact — very good news.

The medical center made \$48,616 for the month of February; it had budgeted a profit of about \$14,000. For the year, the hospital has turned a profit of almost \$28,000.

"Given last year's numbers and this year's numbers, we're better off by a substantial amount," said Grant County Public Hospital District No. 2 commissioner Don Condit at a commissioner meeting March 29.

"There's a couple of key factors — we're under budget for expenses, and January, February and March are traditionally slower months. Now, March has yet to come, and we're not sure what that's going to look like."

ADVERTISEMENT Another key, Condit said, was the fact that the hospital was down in purchased services — it spent \$99,261 in that category for February but budgeted about \$127,000.

"I wonder if that's because (director of nursing) Sarina Fahrner has been hiring nurses. That may be where the impact is compared to the previous year," Condit said. "Purchased services usually exceed the budget. To me, this looks like a different kind of trend."

Hospital administrator Mehdi Merred said he was encouraged by the 2010 numbers he's seen so far.

"Overall it's been positive," he said. "At the same time I don't want to draw any conclusions just yet or draft any glorious plans."

"But at the end of the day, the numbers are encouraging. The fact that we're under budget for expenses is a compliment to the hard work the managers do. Our volume increased in February, our long-term care unit was full and we had an increase in surgeries, labs and outpatient services. Not incurring additional expenses is a good sign."

- Merred said the hospital is continuing to recruit for a medical director position.

"We want somebody with experience that could provide a vision for the clinic and support our practitioners," he said.

The hospital has also begun the process of filling its open financial controller spot, which was vacated when Ken Kiehn recently retired. Merred said 12 people have applied, and he hopes to narrow the list to six, then a final three in the coming weeks.

"We're pleased with the level of interest," he said. "We're excited about finding somebody new. I want to again thank Ken for his contributions. It will be tough to replace him. But we welcome the opportunity to bring somebody else on board and help us achieve our financial goals."

- Director of emergency medical services Doug Martinson announced that the department was informed by Javier O'Brien of Live Nation that it wants the medical center to continue to provide ambulatory services at The Gorge Amphitheatre for the 2010 concert season.

The first concert of the year at The Gorge, the Sasquatch! Festival, will be held Memorial Day weekend.

"It looks like it is going to be a busy season," Martinson said. "We will be ramping up efforts to prepare for the upcoming concert season in April."

- One of the medical center's main directives in 2010 is to improve patient and employee safety.

Martinson said the hospital's disaster planning and emergency preparedness committee has been meeting and working with regional safety consultant Bruce Merighi to develop and update the hospital's emergency plan.

The plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of April. Training for the staff will follow in May.

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