

# Doctors don't miss the days of two GP hospitals

By Jim Moore  
of the Daily Courier

Sometimes, more isn't better. Local physicians who practiced in the area when for-profit Southern Oregon Medical Center and not-for-profit Josephine Memorial Hospital were in competition recall less-than-ideal conditions.

Dr. Tom Turek, who practiced in Grants Pass from 1975 to 2010, remembers that "physicians often had to see patients at both facilities and sometimes have different routines at each facility. Not very efficient for a consistent medical practice."

The two hospitals were merged into Three Rivers Community Hospital and Health Center in 1994. Within a year, Asante Health System was created as an umbrella organization for the two Three Rivers Community Hospital campuses, Rogue Valley Medical Center in Medford, and several other medical facilities in the region.

With that came the campaign for a new hospital, which opened in June 2001 and ushered in a new era of health care in Southern Oregon.

"The new facility has allowed the community to have most of the medical services a patient needs provided right here in Josephine County," Turek said.

"This is a benefit to patients and

Merger has allowed hospital to get equipment that's state-of-the-art

their families as well as to the physicians."

Asante has also made a commitment to be technologically up-to-date and that, combined with the hospital itself, helps in recruiting new doctors to the area, Turek said.

Dr. Scott Nelson said he moved to Grants Pass to open his first practice as a colon and rectal surgeon "because of the climate."

He acknowledged there are many things he couldn't accomplish without the hospital.

Nelson said he worked at 15 different hospitals before opening his own practice and one aspect of Three Rivers stands out. "I'm impressed that here the administration and staff are dedicated to providing the best quality of treatment," he said.

Turek agrees. "Keep in mind it is still ultimately the people who work at the hospital in every capacity that make it a great place," he said. "Josephine County is fortunate to have such a facility and group of people working to provide them with the best health care."

There's another feature of TRCH

that seems to leave an impression on the area's physicians as well.

The hospital benefits from community members donating thousands of volunteer hours annually, and Win Howard, the hospital's chief executive officer, is convinced that spirit resides in the doctors.

"I think the volunteerism extends to our physicians," he said. Howard noted that in addition to local volunteer efforts, many have reached beyond local boundaries, including a group that has made several trips to Haiti to aid earthquake victims.

Perhaps the most significant effect Three Rivers has on local physicians is providing state-of-the-art equipment.

While Nelson has his own practice, he said he and the hospital "work in partnership."

He treats patients there, uses the hospital's equipment at times and, of course, admits them if need be.

The hospital provides the tools for him, and other doctors, to be able to treat patients locally.

One such tool is a 3-D ultrasound machine that allows a physician to treat colon and rectal cancer much more efficiently. Nelson said the machine cost more than \$80,000.

"The things we can do here are the best treatment you can get anywhere," Nelson said.



KEVIN LAUNIUS/Daily Courier

Dr. Scott Nelson shows off a 3-D ultrasound machine at Three Rivers. Nelson has a private practice, but uses the hospital for surgeries and other patient care.

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