

When the rain let up briefly, guests ventured outside to find the bricks they purchased in honor of friends and relatives. The project raised approximately \$2,700 to help pay for the decorative fountains.



ENGRAVED BRICK DEDICATION

Rainy Day Can't Keep Crowd Away

A lively crowd of approximately 50 people turned out despite heavy rain Oct. 15 for the engraved brick dedication ceremony at The Fountains Assisted Living.

When the clouds broke, guests were able to see the engraved bricks in place around the base of the large fountain after a simple ceremony that began with a welcome by SCH Administrator H.A. Turk, followed by a moment of silence and a flute solo by Ashley Smith Howell.



H.A. Turk & Crystal Johnson

this beautiful facility here today," she said, drawing applause from the crowd.

Despite the bad weather, the SCH Auxil-

Fountains Administrator Crystal Johnson made a special presentation to Mr. Turk, presenting an engraved brick that recognizes him as SCH administrator during construction of The Fountains Assisted Living.

"This facility was his vision, and because he turned that into reality, we have



Keith Marshall installed the bricks on a hot October day.

ary delivered punch and high-quality cookies as promised, and helped make the event a success.

Anyone who bought miniature replica bricks can pick them up from Rhonda Moran at Ext. 1555.

Birthdays

October

- 3 Eldine Oglesby*
- 4 Elvie Lee Matejek*
LaQuita Yancy*
- 5 Charla Hultman
- 7 Pat Anderson
Jeremy Barker
- 9 Crystal Richburg
DeDe Rodrigues
- 10 Katie Fine
- 11 Ponnie Bailey*
- 12 James Receptor
- 13 Charlotte Phillips*
- 15 Christine Williams
- 16 Betty Hubbard
- 18 John McGraw**
- 21 Belinda Wilkinson
- 22 Brenda Rodrigues
Mary Lou Schooler*
- 24 Dr. Richard Erickson
- 27 Delores Merchant
Marc Way

November

- 2 Tracy Hollifield
- 5 Marie Breakiron
- 6 Linda Bostrom
- 8 Marcy Murrell
- 13 Elaine Montier
- 14 Dr. David Barr
- 15 Mark Mrnustik
- 16 Carolyn McGuire
- 17 Virginia Tripson
- 19 Henry Mendez
Cindy Burge
- 20 Debbie Marcum
Tina Lewis
Lillian Koether*
- 26 Dr. Jason Williams
- 27 Peggy Boineau
- 28 Celia Garza
- 30 Marsha McBride
Sue Carr *

*Auxiliary

** Board of Directors

CALENDAR



Tuesday, Oct. 31

Fountains Trick or Treat

Residents of The Fountains Assisted Living will hand out bags of candy in the lobby to young trick-or-treaters while supplies last..

5-7 p.m.

The Fountains

Nov. 2 & 3

PALS Class CANCELLED

This class has been cancelled but will be rescheduled soon. For information, call 548-1597.

Tuesday, Nov. 7

SOUPer Tuesday

All SCH employees and volunteers are invited to bring a homemade soup or salad to share. Cups, spoons and tea provided.

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SCH Cafeteria Hallway

Thursday, Nov. 9

Diabetes Workshop

Monthly meeting

7 p.m.

Main Conference Room

Tuesday, Nov. 14

Flu Shots For the Public

Fee is \$25 per person age 9 and up. No out-of-pocket expense for Medicare patients. For information, call 548-1555.

1-7 p.m.

Sweeny Community Center
201 Ashley Wilson Road
Sweeny



Auxiliary's Jewelry Frenzy

Who knew \$5 jewelry could whip up such excitement in Sweeny? From early in the morning until late afternoon, a steady stream of shoppers filled the conference room in search of bargains. At the end of the day, the Auxiliary reported profits of approximately \$1,100, making it one of their most successful projects. A bunch of Pink Ladies worked that day. Two of them were Delta Barnett (left) and Elvie Lee Matejek.



Margie Van Cleave, LPC, is the new director of the Heritage Program for Senior Adults at SCH. Margie, who lives in Angleton, has more than 30 years' experience as a counselor and recently retired from the Sweeny Independent School District.



SCH United Way Campaign Begins Nov. 1

If you would like to sign a pledge card or make a one-time donation to the United Way of Brazoria County, watch your departmental mailboxes.

Forms will be distributed early next week for those who would like to support the charitable organization.

If you want to make your pledge via payroll deduction, your contributions will begin in January. For more information, contact Rhonda Moran at Ext. 1555.

Getting Through Tough Times

Hospital Employees' Dedication Appreciated

Many lessons were learned during the recent payroll challenge, and many of them are quite positive. The best lesson is what a great staff is here providing health services in the West Brazos area. More than 40 of you volunteered to delay getting paid for up to a week, and that was a tremendous message. It might not have been easy to make that sacrifice, but you did — and it made the difference.

As cash matters improved, the second half of that payroll was actually done two days early. Of course, it was embarrassing to have this situation in the media, but even that had some benefits. We were praised for being honest and open about this when it surfaced. Some patients even came in to pay on their accounts to help out.

Amazing.

Another positive lesson pertains to supply discipline. We're learning how to be better stewards of what we are given to work with.

There are signs of improvement, too. ER visits were up in September and continued steady in October. Admissions were up in September, and increased patient activity leads to better collections downstream. Property taxes are starting to be paid, and in November and December they should pick up significantly.

The key to even more patient "business" revolves around recruiting another physician. We are talking with an internal medicine doctor who sounds very interested and is scheduled to visit in November.

I could go on, but won't. Just remember: We have made progress with the sacrifices you made.

In the meantime, please continue to be mindful of customer relations. Doing whatever we can individually to influence patients to chose SCH and our services will help the most to move the improvement process along.



H.A. Turk
Administrator

The Plan For Recovery

To paraphrase the late great Charles Dickens, the Sweeny Hospital District is experiencing the best and worst of times. We're seeing record-setting revenue in multiple departments, but we're also experiencing the tightest cash flow anyone here can remember.

The cash shortage was caused by a variety of things, and they're being addressed in a variety of ways. At the Oct. 24 hospital board meeting, Administrator H.A. Turk presented the following plan for getting the hospital back in the black:

1. Revised Purchasing/Supply Procedures:

A stricter policy for ordering supplies and equipment was adopted in September. The copy machines were reprogrammed to require employees to enter authorization codes. Central Supply is now locked to restrict access. These and other measures will help control expenses in the next few months.

2. Pay Bills With Tax Funds: From November through February and again in July, SCH will receive a total of \$4.2 million in hospital district taxes, enabling us to catch up on any past-due bills.

3. Establish a Central Registration Service:

If you come to SCH for a non-emergency outpatient procedure, the Central Registration clerk will verify your insurance coverage and collect your co-pay and deductible before you get the service. This is a standard practice in many health-care facilities, although we haven't done it here.

4. Full Occupancy At The Fountains:

Rent paid at The Fountains is cash in the bank, no haggling with insurance companies required. As of this writing, 21 of 27 apartments are occupied. We plan to keep one furnished unit as a "respite room" for rent by the day. That leaves 5 left to rent, and we've got marketing efforts underway for those.

5. Assess the Hospitalist Program:

The hospital's contract with Emergency Staffing Solutions (ESS) ends in February, and we have received a competitive bid from another company offering similar hospitalist and ER physician services.

When the hospitalist program first began at SCH, we saw a significant increase in inpatient admissions that eventually leveled off. In 2004, only 2% of our Emergency Department patients were admitted to the hospital -- a percentage far lower than we

found in a survey of other small Texas hospitals with services similar to ours (Edna, Anahuac, Glen Rose, Llano, etc).

We've been analyzing the reasons for the drop in admissions and discussing this with ESS. We regularly review charts of ER patients to see whether they were treated appropriately, and we often see cases where the patients could have been admitted but weren't. This is the issue we are working with ESS address. Even a modest increase in admissions has a huge effect on the hospital's bottom line.

6. Amend The Hospital's Enabling Legislation: When the Texas Legislature reconvenes in January, we'll ask them to give us two new powers:

- Permission to have a line-of-credit loan to smooth out cash flow during the year, and
- Authority to employ physicians directly.

With a line of credit, the hospital can get a loan (the line of credit) approved at the beginning of the year, draw on it as needed when cash is tight, then pay the loan off when tax money arrives. That was standard operating procedure at SCH for more than 20 years, until we learned last year that the hospital doesn't have legislative authority to borrow that way. While it wasn't exactly illegal to have a line of credit, it wasn't specifically authorized either -- and that puts the lender at higher risk. Many hospital districts in Texas have line-of-credit authority, so there's no reason to expect problems getting the authorization we need.

Having the authority to hire physicians directly -- something not currently allowed -- could be a useful tool in bringing new doctors to Sweeny.

We'll be asking for these changes in January, but the Texas Legislature doesn't sign bills until May, so it will be several more months before these efforts pay off.

7. Physician Recruitment: It's simple: More doctors on staff means more patients for the hospital and more revenue. SCH is working with two recruiters to find doctors interested in coming to Sweeny. The goal is to get an internal medicine specialist this year, and another physician next year if possible.

8. Other Initiatives As They Arise:

These aren't the only things we'll be doing -- just what's going on now. Other ideas are being considered. Stay tuned.

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We're on the Web!
www.sweenyhospital.org

War-Time Veterans May Qualify For Assisted-Living Help

In an Oct. 10 program at The Fountains, Sonya Turner from the Brazoria County Veterans' Service Office in Angleton spoke about housing benefits that may be available for certain war-time veterans or their survivors.

In some cases, they may qualify for assistance in paying for assisted living. It's all based on income.

To be considered a "war-time" veteran, a person must have served at least 90 days of active duty, with at least one day during the following time periods:

- World War II: Dec. 7, 1941 through Dec. 31, 1946
- Korean Conflict: June 27, 1950 through Jan. 31, 1955
- Vietnam: Aug. 5, 1964 through May 7, 1975
- Gulf War: Aug. 2, 1990 through current

For more information about these benefits, contact Turner at (979) 864-1289 or visit www.brazoria-county.com/veterans.



The SCH staff held a baby shower for Sweeny/West Brazos EMS paramedics Stephanie and Robert Smith. Their son, Ryan Alexander, was born Oct. 20 weighing 8 lbs. 1 ounce.

Snoop Scoop

Congratulations to **Richard Wetta** and **Jeremy Barker** of Sweeny/West Brazos EMS for passing their EMT-Intermediate exams, and to **David Filipp** for completing the requirements for national registry certification through the National Registry of EMTs.

Kathy Richard's father-in-law, **Ed Richard** (formerly of Sweeny now living in Lafayette, La.), competed in the Senior Olympics State Games in Baton Rouge on Monday and won the gold medal in golfing for ages 80-85. He shot his age, 82. Mr. Richard did not begin playing golf until the age of 69.

SCH is experiencing a baby boom of sorts. In Nursing, **Wanda Lemon** has a new granddaughter, **Cekiya Gale Winters**, born Oct. 12 weighing 7 pounds, 6 ounces. Her mother is Wanda's daughter, **Heather Winters** of Sweeny.

In Dietary, **Jeanetta Simple's** first granddaughter, **Deja Sims**, was born Sept. 28 weighing 7 pounds, 6 ounces. Her mother is Jeanetta's daughter, **Shantai Thompson**, of Freeport.

In the Lab, **Sue Wilkes** has a new grandbaby who is still in the hospital in Houston. Prayers are in order for all concerned.

Delores Merchant is selling tickets for two Project Graduation 2007 fund-raisers. They include a Pre-Game Meal on Nov. 3 featuring turkey and dressing by Scott's Catering. Tickets are \$7 each.

She's also selling tickets for the Project Graduation Gun Raffle. Fifty guns are being raffled off. Tickets are \$20 each. Ticket sales for both events end Monday, Oct. 30. For information, call Delores at Ext. 1591.

Tuesday Oct. 31 is Halloween, and residents of The Fountains Assisted Living will be passing out bags of candy from approximately 5-7 p.m. in the lobby for children in costume. Any hospital employees who have youngsters are invited to bring them by for treats.



Thought For The Day

"A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances, but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes." — Hugh Downs