

Avera Sacred Heart Hospital plans 'Northern Lights' addition

Avera Sacred Heart Hospital will be bringing a new light on health care in the Yankton Region beginning this summer with the addition of the three-story "Northern Lights" addition.

When Avera Sacred Heart's current hospital was built 30 years ago, the planning process at that time included discussion of building a new kitchen area. However, the decision was ultimately made to keep food preparation in the Benedictine Center located to the south of the hospital because Sister James Nursing Home was located in that facility, as well.

During the intervening years, the need to update the hospital's kitchen was not forgotten.

"But it always took second place to the more clinical and technological projects," said Pam Rezac, the president and CEO of ASHH. "The Sisters finally said it is time.

We need to provide for that basic hospitality that

our patients and staff deserve. Further impetus to do it was the fact that we need to replace the laboratory and build a new pharmacy. It became a multifaceted project."

That decision led to what hospital officials have named the "Northern Lights" project. In addition to a new kitchen, the more than \$17 million expansion will include a cafeteria, pharmacy, laboratory, physician amenities, sleep lab, environmental services space and meeting areas, among other things.

Located on the northwest corner of the existing hospital, the facility will have many windows to allow in natural light — thus making the "Northern Lights" name appropriate.

"It is going to change the entire north face of the hospital," Rezac said. "It will be a three-story, spacious facility that will let in light and create a warm and healing atmosphere. We created it based on a lot of input

from the patients, families, staff and physicians. We wanted this project to prepare us for the future. It will be something the whole region will benefit from."

"Our initial projections are that it will take 24 months to complete, but we're hoping it will be a shorter timeframe than that," said Doug Ekeren, vice president of planning and development for ASHH.

He said the focus during planning for the project was what the institution could do to improve its hospitality services for patients, visitors, physicians and staff.

"Right now, when our kitchen staff has to take food from the kitchen to the farthest nursing unit, that is a long haul," Ekeren said of the process of carting food throughout the facility. "It makes it a challenge for everybody to have fresh, hot food delivered. Make no mistake, I think our nutrition services staff and patient care staff

do a great job with the situation we've had for the last 30 years. But we can make it so much better.

"By moving over on to the north side of the hospital and building a new kitchen, we can be much more efficient with our use of staff and other resources. We can also make it a safer work environment for staff and provide better options for anyone coming through the cafeteria. We can be more responsive to food requests from patients because the kitchen will be in the same building."

Besides the kitchen and cafeteria, another major component will be a new pharmacy.

"Currently, the pharmacy and our biomedical services share space on the third floor of the hospital, and there is really only room for one of them," Ekeren said. "With the growth that both of them have seen, we're going to move the pharmacy to the third floor of the new addition, and biomedical services

will expand into the former pharmacy space."

Some other changes include:

- When the laboratory moves into the Northern Lights addition, the radiology department will expand into the former lab space. The expansion of both of these departments will meet the growing regional demand for their services.

- In-patient physical, speech and occupational therapy services will be offered in the addition.

- New amenities for physicians in the expansion will include meeting rooms, dining facilities and more computer work stations.

- Space will be created for a hospitalist — which is a physician who specializes in the delivery of comprehensive medical care to hospitalized patients — that will be starting after the first of the year.

- A support area will be created in anticipation of future internal medicine residents.

- Finally, there will be a new office area for patient care management.

Despite all the added space at the hospital, Ekeren said an increase in employees is not anticipated at this time.

Rezac said she is excited about what the addition will mean to the hospital and residents in this region.

"I think the Northern Lights project overall is going to provide a much more hospitable environment for patients and staff," she said. "The services provided will be much more efficient and effective. We'll be able to utilize technology that has not been available to us because of the space shortages in the pharmacy, the laboratory and the preparation of food. It will also offer space for facilitating the teamwork that is going to be necessary in our new system of care. We have to be more focused on a coordinated delivery system."

Johnson accepting nominations for Angels in Adoption now

U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) has announced that he is accepting nominations for the Angels in Adoption program. Each year, Johnson recognizes South Dakotans who have made a difference in the lives of children in need of a family.

"As the grandfather of two adopted children, I understand the

tremendous impact that adoption has on both children and the families that welcome them into their homes," Johnson said. "Throughout our state, hundreds of families have opened their homes to children in need and I encourage people to nominate deserving individuals or families."

To nominate a South

Dakota family, visit <http://www.johnson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=angels>.

A longtime supporter of adoption programs and member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, Johnson has supported legislation to make the adoption tax

credit permanent. The tax credit helps lessen the financial burden that families face when adopting a child. Adoption fees and legal proceedings for some domestic adoptions can cost more than \$40,000.


In South Dakota, nearly 1,500 children are

in the foster care system. Each year, approximately 75 children in the state age out of the foster care system before they are adopted.

Angels in Adoption was established in 1999 by the Congressional Coalition of Adoption Institute to raise


awareness about the importance of adoption.

The deadline for nominations is July 20. To nominate a South Dakota family, visit <http://www.johnson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=angels>.



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