



### TETON VALLEY HOSPITAL & SURGICENTER MISSION STATEMENT

*The mission of Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter, owned and operated by the citizens of Teton County, Idaho, is to provide high quality health care services in inpatient, outpatient, and emergency settings for residents and visitors of Teton Valley, as well as portions of Bonneville and Fremont County, Idaho, and Teton County, Wyoming.*

*We will act as the focal point for the community's health care system, with outreach to surrounding underserved areas.*

*Our commitment to continuity of care, health promotion and education is assured by our excellent staff. Community awareness, involvement, and support are essential in maintaining our local health care system.*

*As we carry out this mission, we are mindful of our belief in the worth and dignity of all people, and in the right of all persons to access health care services.*

The original Teton Valley Hospital, which opened in 1939, reflected a rural community's self-sufficiency. In 1961 the hospital staff still cleaned and reused rubber gloves, glass syringes and needles.



## a Rare Story of Rural Success

by Mary Lou Hansen

Not many years ago, Dr. Kitchener Head, Teton Valley Hospital's sole physician at the time, hefted patients needing emergency care in and out of his own station wagon—the only local "ambulance." That was in 1976. Today Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter owns two state-of-the-art ambulances, and the sheriff's office operates a 911 system that swiftly and efficiently handles all emergency calls. Volunteer emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Though financially strapped and unable to meet state codes and standards just decades ago, Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter is now lauded as being among the nation's most progressive in rural health care. "Teton Valley Hospital typifies [the] major transition...within [rural] communities to make health and health care a local matter," says Steven Millard, president of the Idaho Hospital Association.

Testament to a community's hardy will, Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter has been at the heart of health services in Teton Valley since its inception in 1939, keeping pace with the many changes in both the health-care industry and the local community.

With vision and leadership, Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter's board of directors, administrator and medical staff initiated recent growth by renewing the long-standing partnership between the hospital and the community it serves. With help from Idaho's Community Health Services Development program, planners conducted community surveys and public meetings to discover which health services residents wanted and needed. Hospital goals were redefined to meet community needs, new health programs and services were implemented, and an extensive \$3.7 million expansion and remodeling project was completed.

"The successful operation of the hospital lies in the basic provision of quality medical care," says Susan Kunz, hospital administrator. "Our vision is to offer a full scope of primary medical services."

This goal is met through the loyalty and dedication of physicians and staff, and through community support, she notes. "In the 70 plus-year history of the hospital," Kunz adds, "we [have] had only seven physicians." Dr. Olaf Hoffman (1937), Dr. Gordon Jensen (1942), Dr. LeGrande Larsen

(1942), Dr. Kitchener Head (1961), Dr. Larry Curtis (1986 to the present), Dr. David Rakel (1994) and Dr. Chad Horrocks (1999 to the present) have provided crucial medical-staff leadership and an important sense of stability and continuity.

Dr. Curtis, like his predecessors, provides Teton Valley patients with medical options close to home, saving them the strain and expense of traveling to unfamiliar doctors. "We have served and will continue to serve our patients on a continuous basis, 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he says. "We hope to establish a relationship of friendship and trust with our patients who seek care in the hospital or clinic setting, and we are extending our best effort to assure quality medical care is rendered in our community."

Serving 16,000 patients in 2000, and generating annual revenues greater than \$5.5 million, the hospital has grown from being one of many small rural facilities on the brink of extinction to an exemplary center of rural health. Noting this miraculous recovery, Jim Przybilla, project director of the Idaho Rural Health Education Center at the time of Teton Valley Hospital's recent expansion, called the hospital "one of the best rural health comeback stories in the West."

"We have come a long way in 70 years," Kunz agrees. "As we look forward, the key to continued stability of our facility is for the community to utilize the broad array of medical services."

### Building a solid foundation

The original 5,600-square-foot Teton Valley Hospital was built in the late 1930s using labor provided by the Works Progress Administration. The \$40,000 structure was constructed with native white stone and paid for with a combination of federal and county dollars. Hospital furnishings were purchased with donations from the people of Teton Valley, raised through fund-raising dinners, dances and auctions.

The project began in 1936 with much community support. "The people of [the] valley decided it was high time they had a hospital and started a donation drive for the purpose of raising funds to build it with," *Teton Valley News* reported. Two years later, on December 17, 1938, the community was invited to an open house to view the nearly completed facility. "No expense was spared or shortcut taken in the building of [the] beautiful building," according to *Teton Valley News*.

The hospital included patient beds, an X-ray machine, an operating room, an obstetric ward and nursery, office space, a kitchen, laundry facilities and a laboratory, plus living quarters for one nurse. Dedication ceremonies held May 7, 1939, attracted a large crowd of supporters excited to have better medical facilities available locally.

In 1965 work began on a 6,600-square-foot addition. The project was funded with a \$110,000 bond approved by Teton County residents by an overwhelming majority of 716 to 53 votes. The project evolved after an August 1963 inspection led the Idaho State Board of Health to order the hospital to make



Teton Valley News heralded the hospital's near completion in late 1938, detailing items sold during a fund-raising auction. A 1965 story announced expansion plans.



In 1965 Dr. Head packed his station wagon, then the valley's only ambulance, and headed to Boise as a state rep.

"Ambulance? None! I came to the valley with a Chevrolet station wagon. That and Bob Bean's old hearse were all we had, and used constantly, often transporting patients as far as Salt Lake City.

Facilities in Idaho Falls were pretty slim then too. The advent of EMTs with a real ambulance was a great step forward. Then I could wait in the hospital and prepare for the patient.

Ottan, when I was the ambulance driver and everything else, I would get to the accident scene and find some good Samaritan had already loaded up the patient and taken him to the hospital while I was miles away looking for him. We had no radios or cell phones. Word of an accident would come by telephone from a passerby who often gave very poor directions."

—Dr. Katherine Head

improvements or face closure. The new wing housed 12 patient beds, an emergency room and an operating room. The original hospital was remodeled to accommodate exam rooms, doctors' offices and other support facilities. Today the original hospital building is home to Dr. Curtis' Teton Valley Medical Center.

Thirty years passed before the next major hospital improvements began. In 1997 a \$3.7 million hospital renovation and expansion project was completed. Money for the project came from \$1.7 million in community donations and grants plus a 20-year, \$2 million loan. The entire facility was remodeled and updated to comply with regulatory standards in the areas of pharmacy, nursery, infection control, fire and safety. The expansion added two state-of-the-art operating rooms; an outpatient observation suite; a mammography suite; home health program facilities; an education/conference room; a rehabilitation suite with therapy pool; four private patient rooms with full baths; and marketing, foundation and community-outreach offices. The hospital facility now totals 28,000 square feet and employs 150 staff members.

### Community support

Astonishingly, the building, programs and people operate without the assistance of tax-generated subsidies. In addition to relying on patient-care revenues, hospital budgets and capital improvements grow out of local fund-raising efforts and grants. Indeed, residents of Teton Valley have always given of themselves to build this hospital of their own.

Even during the Great Depression, valley citizens kneeled together nearly \$3,000 to help furnish the original hospital. A Christmas Eve auction in 1938 netted \$234.20 through the sale of donated coal, grain, haircuts, dinners, chickens, ducks, pigs, calves, butter, canned goods, wood and beer. A tonsil operation was auctioned off for \$14, which was big money for the day. The week before, on December 17, 1938, Driggs merchants had donated 10 percent of their total sales to the hospital fund. Community mem-



bers also organized dances, dinners and service projects to raise money for their new hospital. In February 1939 Driggs students agreed not to give Valentine's Day cards, but to save the money they might have spent and donate it to the hospital. A \$14 gift resulted.

The Driggs Lions Club sponsored the 1965 addition, raising money by hauling residents' "spring-cleaning" garbage and raffling off a newly repainted "fishin' truck" and fishing poles at the start of the season. The active club has always considered the hospital its fund-raising priority. "We just decided to do all we could," charter member Dave Harshorn explains. "The hospital needed our donations the most. Everybody turned out to help."

Generous community gifts to the hospital continue to this day. In 1991 a network of volunteers organized the Hospital Auxiliary and opened the See 'N' Save thrift store in Driggs. The store's first earnings went toward new hospital gowns for patients. Today more than 100 volunteers run the thrift store, and more than \$200,000 has been generated to purchase items that enhance patient care.

In 1993 the hospital board created



Dr. Olaf D. Hoffman became Teton Valley Hospital's first physician in 1939.

operating room and a one-bed emergency room. Today the facility offers two operating rooms, two emergency rooms and a full outpatient recovery suite.

• Just six months ago, patients requiring MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) services had to travel outside the valley for diagnosis. Today a mobile MRI unit visits Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter on a weekly schedule.

• Twenty years ago, elderly patients suffering strokes or other illnesses often became homebound or were placed in nursing homes. Today the hospital provides physical and occupational therapy to rehabilitate these patients so they can remain mobile and independent. In addition, the home care services program can often provide the help these patients need to remain at home rather than in an extended care facility.

Community support has buoyed Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter since its beginning. Residents rallied for the 1939 dedication of the new building (above left), proud to have a modern medical facility in their rural agricultural valley. In 1997 (above right) community members young and old attended the dedication ceremony for the hospital's latest renovation and expansion, a \$3.7 million dollar project.



the Teton Valley Health Care Foundation to raise money for a complete overhaul of the existing facility. In just four years the foundation raised \$1.7 million for the hospital's extensive renovation and expansion project. Individual donors made generous gifts ranging from \$5 to \$250,000, while various fund-raising efforts generated money through the sale of cookbooks, raffle tickets and auction items. In addition, the foundation raised funds to update nearly every piece of equipment that went into the expanded hospital facility and has also acquired gifts from donors wishing to help expand community health programs and services.

Today the renamed Teton Valley Hospital Foundation continues to seek donations to fund ongoing hospital improvements. They are currently in the midst of a \$250,000 campaign to turn the general X-ray room into a state-of-the-art radiology and fluoroscopy facility, which would generate continuous, sharper images of internal injuries.

Cash donations are just one way residents support their hospital; community members also generously donate their time and expertise. The hospital's volunteer program currently involves more than 200 com-

munity members who help hospital staff in all departments, deliver meals to homebound seniors, track infant immunization records and provide chaplaincy, hospice and respite care to patients and families. Community members also support their hospital by utilizing its services and frequenting the thrift store.

### A story of success

A model for small rural hospitals in the Rocky Mountain region and across the nation, Teton Valley Hospital & Surgicenter is a county-owned facility licensed by the state of Idaho and certified by Medicare as a critical access facility. The hospital is governed by a seven-member board of trustees, appointed by the Teton County commissioners. The current board of hospital trustees includes chairman Don Betts, Nancy Arnold, Jo Haddock, Nancy McCoy, Ken Chambers, Shawn Perkins and Darwin Josephson. Susan Kurz has been hospital administrator since 1986.

For more information about local health services or becoming an active supporter of community health, contact hospital marketing director Susan Fenger at 354-2383, extension 182. ▲



Chris Tilt, first president of the Teton Valley Hospital Foundation; Larry Cooke, hospital board trustee; Don Betts, board chair; and administrator Susan Kurz break ground in 1995 for the hospital's monumental expansion.

and first aid, sports medicine, parenting, stress management, tobacco cessation, pain management, diabetic education, weight management and mature driving skills. The Baby Track Immunization Program ensures timely vaccination of all infants, and hospital personnel offer free blood-pressure monitoring, administer bilingual services, and host a health fair annually. Outreach volunteers also deliver more

than 900 meals per year to homebound senior citizens across Teton Valley.

• This emphasis on a healthy community is made possible by individual donors, grants from various organizations and assistance from many local, regional and state agencies.

• In 1990 the hospital medical staff consisted of one physician who covered all calls, assisted by just 44 hospital employees. Today the hospital's medical staff includes two family practice physicians and two mid-level practitioners. Another 25 specialists provide radiology, pathology, anesthesia, obstetrical, urology, counseling, ophthalmology, orthopedic and surgical services. The hospital support staff includes nearly 150 employees.

• In the 1980s elderly patients were routinely admitted simply to keep them under nursing care while their feeding or medication schedules were monitored and adjusted. Today the hospital's home care services program enables these patients to remain at home while trained nurses or aides make scheduled visits to provide the necessary assistance.

• Before the 1997 renovation project, the hospital included one