

**COOKEVILLE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER**  
**By Heather Mullinix: Herald – Citizen Staff, Cookeville, TN**



**COOKEVILLE** – From the humble beginnings of **Howard Hospital in 1921**, Cookeville Regional Medical Center has grown into a health care facility offering cutting-edge medical services to the entire Upper Cumberland region.

As the hospital continues to grow, hospital personnel continue to plan for future needs of the community. Most

recently, a six-story tower is complete and work is beginning to expand the obstetrics and delivery department at CRMC.

But that’s not all that will be as the region continues to grow. Last week, CRMC Chief Executive Bernie Mattingly shared the final CRMC Master Plan with the hospital’s planning committee.

“The main thing to take away from this is what we will need for future growth and expansion,” Mattingly said.

That includes expanded emergency room facilities and moving the laboratory to the core of the building so that it is central to patient care areas. Also, though an expansion is underway in the obstetrics and delivery department, that is only expected to meet community needs for the next five years or so, and the plan addresses where the department could expand after that.

**Howard Hospital was started by Dr. William Howard, a local physician, in 1921** after he decided his patients deserved more than surgeries performed on the kitchen table of his home by lamplight. At Howard Hospital, nurses carried coal to the furnace, tended the homemade incubator, sterilized instruments in a pressure cooker and assisted the doctors in carrying patients upstairs to rooms costing \$3 per day.

In 1950, Cookeville General Hospital opened and the building hasn’t stopped.

Friday, DRMC will hold a dedication for its new North Patient Tower from 2 to 4 p.m. A family and community day will be held Saturday with special activities for children and tours for the community available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The six-story tower includes a new main lobby and a distinctive main entrance for the facility. Also, the elevators in the tower will take visitors to any part of the hospital they need. Registration will also move to the first floor of the expansion facility, along with a gift shop, chapel and library.

Looking ahead at future needs, the facility also includes space to expand surgical services, as well.

An expanded cancer center, complete with its own healing garden and dedicated parking lot, will be housed on the second floor. The Cancer Center will triple from its current size to 33,000 square feet. It will include private exam rooms and chemotherapy rooms, along with an open area for chemotherapy.

“Most people find comfort in sharing with others during chemotherapy,” Mattingly said. “We’re trying to make this as pleasant an experience as possible under the circumstances.”

With the expansion of The Cancer Center, CRMC became the second hospital in Tennessee to offer tomotherapy treatment system, which delivers a precise beam of radiation to destroy cancerous tumors without destroying surrounding healthy tissue.

The intensive care unit will be moved to the third floor of the new tower, with 30 ICU patient rooms offered, along with space for families to stay when their loved ones are critically ill or injured.

Floors four through six will have private patient rooms, adding 96 patient beds to CRMC. Once open, the hospital will have 227 private rooms. The hospital is licensed for 247 beds, but 20 of those are for rehabilitation.

“When a caregiver goes in a room, they don’t have to think, “Where’s this, where’s that?” Mattingly said.

Rooms are larger than current rooms and will include a sofa that will fold down into a bed for family to stay with their loved one. There are also waiting areas on each floor.

Hospital services will begin relocating to the new tower Jan. 5 with registration slated to move first. After that, plans are for one unit at a time to move and get settled in.

The master plan looks at access to the campus and medical facilities, future street improvements and future facility needs. With the need to expand the emergency room the next need a the hospital. Mattingly said such an expansion would have to be very well planned.

“We would have to keep it functional while we expanded,” he said.

Once the obstetrics expansion is complete, Mattingly said the administrators and the board could evaluate the financial ability of the hospital to start another expansion project.

“We need to evaluate where we stand financially.. We’ve got priorities for various capital needs in the facilities we need to take into consideration, and that’s all part of this planning process,” Mattingly said.



**Pictured:** Cookeville General Hospital opened its doors in 1950.

1921 — Dr. William Howard opened Howard Hospital on E. Main Street.  
1950 — Cookeville General Hospital opened Dec. 18 on our present site. Three days later, the first baby was born there.  
1957 — The current S Wing was added at a cost of \$1 million.  
1971 — The Fifth St. addition was dedicated with a new Emergency Room and Coronary Care Unit.

1973 — The Respiratory Therapy Department was opened and provided diagnostic testing locally.  
1974 — A Minimal Care Unit was opened and offered lower cost for patients needing nominal care.  
1974 — The Nuclear Medicine Department was opened with the latest in radioisotope equipment.  
1976 — A \$2.2 million, five-phase expansion was begun to add 55 patient beds, a clean-air surgery room, a seven-bed Intensive Care Unit, a fifth-floor shell, and other areas.  
1982 — A six-floor expansion was opened that included the latest model CT scanner.  
1989 — A Neurosurgery Clinic was opened in partnership with Vanderbilt University Medical Center.  
1991 — A Pulmonary Clinic was opened.  
1991 — The free Cookeville Community Clinic opened for noninsured residents with incomes below the poverty level — the first in Tennessee and one of only 86 in the U.S.  
1993 — The Professional Office Building was opened to aid in physician recruitment.  
1994 — The Express Care Clinic opened to treat Emergency Room patients with nonurgent needs.  
1994 — The Heart Center opened and offered basic cardiac tests and procedures along with the cardiac catheterization lab.  
1998 — The Open-Heart Surgical Unit opened.  
The first open-heart surgery in Cookeville was performed April 15, 1998.

## CRMC ADDS NEW PATIENT TOWER, BEGINS OB EXPANSION

Heather Mullinix  
Herald-Citizen Staff, Cookeville, TN  
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**COOKEVILLE** -- Cookeville Regional Medical Center has finished a busy year with the completion of the \$80 million North Patient Tower and beginning of an obstetrics department expansion.

Earlier this month, CRMC officials welcomed the public to its new North Patient Tower. The six-story, 228,000-square-foot project had been in the works since the fall of 2006.

"It's not every day or every year you get to dedicate and open a facility that is as important for our community and everyone who will benefit from our new patient tower for years to come," said Bernie Mattingly, CRMC chief executive, prior to the dedication ceremonies Dec. 12. "This dedication comes at a very appropriate time, just a couple of weeks before Christmas. This is our way of saying Merry Christmas, Cookeville. This is our gift to you."

The lobby has a two-story glass front to bring in natural light. There will be seating areas for visitors. The trunk of the spruce tree that was once outside the hospital has returned to CRMC property in the form of an original sculpture by Cookeville artist Brad Sells.

The first floor of the hospital will include registration offices and space for expanding the operating rooms. As technology advances, the necessary equipment gets larger, Mattingly said.

The second floor will house an expanded cancer center. Currently the cancer center operates in a 9,500-square-foot space. The new space will be about 30,000 square feet. The hospital added a tomotherapy unit, only the second to be installed in Tennessee. The equipment delivers a precise beam of radiation to destroy cancerous tumors without destroying surrounding healthy tissue.

The cancer center also has dedicated parking for patients and an ambulance drop off area. Chemotherapy will be available in a light, open area, with a view of a garden designed and installed by the Putnam County Master Gardeners. There are also private rooms for chemotherapy and exam rooms.

The third floor will have 30 intensive care units, two of which will have adjoining family rooms.

"We wanted to have space, especially for the sickest of the sick, so family could be there and be with them and support them during that time," Mattingly said. "And, another thing we tried to incorporate is, we are still in the country, and when someone is admitted to the hospital, the whole family comes."

Floors four through six will have private patient rooms, adding 96 patient beds to CRMC. Once open, the hospital will have 227 private rooms. The hospital is licensed for 247 beds, but 20 of those are for rehabilitation.

The new patient rooms are identical, which was done with the patient's safety in mind.

Rooms are larger than current rooms and will include a sofa that will fold down into a bed for family to stay with their loved one. There are also waiting areas on each floor.

The rooms have large windows to bring in natural light, and color schemes are earth tones.

"We've incorporated the Planetree concept, which is the philosophy that natural daylight, art, trees and plants enhances the healing process," Mattingly said. "We're trying to create that healing environment in the new building."

The philosophy will extend outside the hospital walls as well, with landscaping planned for the entire campus and a garden.

The \$80 million project was financed by a \$45 million loan to the hospital, with the remainder coming from the hospital's operating budget.

The lobby and registration area will open Jan. 5, and the cancer center will begin moving into its new quarters at that time. After that, Mattingly said one unit at a time will begin moving into the new tower, beginning with units 4 and 5 West.

"We'll get them settled in," Mattingly said. "We want a smooth transition. We do not want to interrupt patient care."

### Baby Boom

During the past few years, CRMC has seen significant growth in its obstetrics department and that "baby boom" prompted the CRMC board of trustees to begin work on a short-term solution to meet the growing needs.

In August, the board approved a plan to renovate and expand the current department with eight observation beds, a new reception area and five labor, deliver and recovery rooms. There are currently only seven LDR rooms. A second phase of the renovation would expand the nursery.

"We've been rearranging schedules, if there is an induction or C-section scheduled, to give us time to discharge some patients and have beds available," said Linda Crawford, CRMC chief clinical officer. "It's awkward and disappointing for the women because they've waited nine months and we're asking them to wait just a little bit longer."

"The nurses and physicians have worked hard to make the situation work. The doctors will come in earlier to start discharging patients, or we'll ask the mothers to room in with the baby when we need additional nursery space. But there are too many days we're having to do that and we're at the point we need to do something."

The project has an estimated cost of just under \$5 million and is expected to be completed in 16 months.

The obstetrics department has seen a great deal of growth in the past five years, with about 100 more births per year for the past two years. Much of that increase, though, came when White County Community Hospital discontinued obstetrics services and Cumberland County lost two gynecologists. And as the practices of local gynecologists has grown, so has the need for women's services at CRMS. Last year, about 1,500 babies were born at CRMC.

The proposed plan would allow the hospital to serve an additional 200 women each year without adding additional post-partem rooms.

"It's not a long-term fix, and we're not pretending it is a long-term fix," Mattingly said. "But looking at all our needs and the resources we have available, it's our opinion it best meets the needs on the clinical side and our fiduciary responsibilities on the financial side, as well."

## **PATIENT SEES PROGRESS AT CRMC OVER THE YEARS**

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Herald-Citizen Photo/Heather Mullinix

**Margaret Oaks** looks at the birthday card Cookeville Regional Medical Center sent her twins on their first birthday in 1952. Oaks was the 29th patient to be admitted to the hospital following its opening in 1950.

**COOKEVILLE** -- Late on a snowy night Jan. 5, 1951, Margaret Oaks woke her brother who was visiting from Ohio and had him get his car ready. She was going to the new Cookeville hospital to have her twins.

"It was so stuffy, they rolled down the windows so I could breathe," said Oaks of the drive from Baxter that wintry night.

When they arrived at the recently opened hospital, a nurse ushered Oaks into the maternity section of the three-wing hospital and phoned for her doctor, **Dr. Thurman Shipley**. Eight-pound baby boy Jerry was delivered at 3:30 a.m. Seven-pound baby girl Kathy followed at 4:15 a.m. They were the first set of twins to be born at the Cookeville Medical Center, and Oaks was only the 29th patient admitted to the hospital.

Oaks spent the rest of that day resting up in the maternity ward, along with three other women. With mother and babies doing well, Oaks said Shipley discharged them later that afternoon.

"We didn't have insurance so, since we were all healthy, he sent us home so we wouldn't have a bigger bill," Oaks said.

Almost two weeks before, on Christmas Eve, Oaks and **her husband, the late Clarence Fowler Oaks**, had been into the hospital, expecting the birth of their second child.

"I'd spend all day cooking for Christmas," she said. "They said that caused me to go into false labor."

But, she was sent home with unexpected news. The single child she had been expecting was actually twins.

"**Dr. [Kenneth] Haile** asked if my husband or I had twins in the family. I was so scared. I told him no, even though we did," she said. "He said, 'Well, there's more than one baby.' They took X-rays and saw the babies were healthy and then they sent me home."

The new hospital was a new experience for Oaks, who had delivered her first child, Glenn, in 1948 at the Howard Hospital, the forerunner of today's Cookeville Regional Medical Center. **Dr. William Howard** operated the facility on East Main Street.

"It felt like you were walking into a home," Oaks said of the Howard Hospital. "The maternity ward was just four beds, and there were only five or six doctors in Cookeville at that time."

She recalls being cared for by a nurse, Adele Young, on that first hospital visit.

Over the years, Oaks, who is now 81 years old, has paid many visits to Cookeville Regional Medical Center. Times have changed. Nursing staff once wore traditional white uniforms with caps and doctors were never seen without a long white coat, she said. Today, medical staff often opt for scrubs and sensible shoes. Smoking was banned from the building years ago, and ward-type rooms have been replaced with private and semi-private patient care areas.

But the biggest change has been the size of the hospital.

"In 1981, I was looking out the window at the expansion they were doing," Oaks said. She was visiting her mother and the hospital was finishing up its first big expansion, which started in 1976. The \$2.2 million expansion added 55 patient beds, a clean-air surgery room, a seven-bed intensive care unit and a fifth-floor shell.

"I thought, this is as big as its going to get," she said.

But CRMC wasn't finished. Just the next year, a sixth floor was opened. Since then, CRMC added a neurosurgery clinic, pulmonary clinic, performed its first open heart surgery in 1998 and added a helipad and a cardiovascular intensive care unit. In 2003, CRMC began work on an ambulatory surgery center and opened the acute care inpatient unit.

In December, CRMC opened its newest expansion, the North Patient Tower. The addition allows the hospital to offer all private patient rooms, expand the cancer center, expand ICU units, allow for future growth of surgical needs and provide space for families that are staying with their loved ones.

But that's not all that has changed over the last six decades. Oaks noted the increase in the number of doctors serving Putnam County and the Upper Cumberland. In the 1950s, one doctor was responsible for the care of the patient. Today, more than 140 physicians provide services in 36 specialty areas.

"I think it's great how much the hospital has grown," Oaks said. "It's good to see things grown and it's good they can do so much more."

## **THELMA CUNNINGHAM**

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN:

The Putnam County Soil Conservation District is pleased to welcome Thelma Cunningham as the newest member of the Board of Supervisors. Thelma is a native of Putnam County and was appointed to serve a three-year term beginning in April of 2008.

The Board is very glad to have Thelma as a member. She brings a lifetime of experience as a farmer. Her experience and knowledge began on the family farm that has been in the King family since the 1800s.

**Thelma is the daughter of Chester and Lorelle King.** She and her twin sister Velma were the first twins born in the old Cookeville Hospital and Dr. Thurman Shipley's first set of twins to deliver. She and sisters Velma and younger sister Martha still maintain the farm. Thelma raises cattle, chickens, peacocks and guineas along with harvesting hay, and keeping up with a garden.

She is a member of the Farm Bureau Volunteer Ladies organization and even though she is quite busy she makes time to attend and contribute to the monthly SDC Board meetings and help with SCD activities.

The Putnam County Soil Conservation District Board is dedicated to informing and educating farmers and other land users about the importance of soil and water conservation. They also work to help the NRCS staff provide technical and financial assistance to help farmers install conservation practices and improve their management.

\*See Cumberland Tales: WWII And Public Health At Home at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>