

Positive changes taking place at St. Vincent

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St. Vincent Salem Hospital took the ground running releasing ideas about moving into the future during a special meeting Feb. 11.

Plans ranging from quality of care to record keeping was discussed at the meeting, which was attended by Interim CEO Joe Roche, Bruce Haga, vice president of the physicians network, John Winenger, Melissa Richardson, public relations/marketing manager and Tom Wisser, lead system consultant/marketing.

"We plan to have the best management for the hospital to build a cohesive group of physicians for the care of the community," Haga said. "We plan to recruit and attract physicians and retain them for our community. We want to focus on quality, but this will take time, maybe two or three years.

"We also plan to have new electronic records at all offices and here at the hospital."

The positive side to electronic records is if a patient needs to be seen by another St. Vincent hospital or physician, their medical records are there for the doctors to see and help establish their care.

Doctors Khan, Aziz and Perkins have signed contracts to stay with St. Vincent Salem Hospital and effective March 8, Dr. Stephen Kemker and Dr. Kalen Carty will join the team.

"We plan to have an aggressive recruiting plan for our physicians," Haga said. "We would like to see at least three more physicians come to Washington County including a Pediatrician and a family practice, with plans to keep the sites of Pekin and Campbellsburg open and enhance their services with a physician in each location.

"We want to convince people to come back here, we want to serve the community with excellent primary care. We want to focus on the care we are best at, and if care can't be provided here, we have great communication with many major hospitals in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville and Children's Hospital, we will get our patient to the place that will provide the best possible care."

Roche said some small community hospitals try to do everything, but St. Vincent wants to provide exceptional care through primary care, office visits and the emergency room.

"Our doctors will make confident decisions, what to do and where to do them if the patient needs more care that can be given here at St. Vincent Salem Hospital," Roche said. "We will not do things here if we can't do them with excellence. We want you to trust that we will serve quality care and safety for our patients. If the community will recognize who we are and what we do well, we can re-build this hospital with confidence."

During the first and second day of operating under St. Vincent Salem Hospital, the Joint Commission of Hospitals visited the hospital for a evaluation. They spent two full days talking with the staff, interviewing patients, observing in operations, looking through records and evaluating the grounds.

In the evaluation, only two minor things in documentation were found, nothing was found under patient care.

In documentation, abbreviations were used wrong and a doctors order was written to broadly.

In the building evaluation, a leaky roof was found and a malfunctioning alarm on the oxygen tanks was not working properly and that was fixed right away.

"I believe with everything this hospital has been through, this should speak volumes to our community," Roche said. "The Joint Commission was very complementary of the patient care in the ER, radiology department, the lab and in patient care and was overall very pleased with the evaluation."

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This accreditation is not required to be done, but St. Vincent has chosen to be accredited and is the only free standing physicians practice in Indiana.

As for the change in billing, Richardson said that will now be coming for Chicago and should be much faster than in the past.

She said the hospital has also negotiated with major insurance companies on rates that are fair and competitive and will not effect the patient.

The hospital by no means is finished. Roche said they will continue to evaluate needs and provide what is needed.

“We will look at the needs of our community of what services we will bring in and what the community can support,” he said. “We will identify what we can do well and financially support it with changes that are viable.”

Plans are in the works for a community day on Saturday, March 6 for the community to enjoy with free screenings and fun things for the kids to do.

Salem soon won't be the only new member to the St. Vincent family. At last week's meeting it was announced that negotiations have started with Dunn Memorial Hospital in Bedford to become part of St. Vincent.