

Earth has moved yet again in Falls City

**By Jason Schock,
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Community Medical Center Sunday afternoon held a ground-breaking ceremony in a field just north of town that over the course of the next 18 months will steadily grow into a 56,000 square foot medical facility. A \$21 million hospital structure perhaps worth much more than that awesome dollar value to this community and the people who live here.

Remarkably, the new CMC represents the fourth major multi-million dollar construction project undertaken in Falls City within the past five years, following Thomas Track & Field inside Jug Brown Stadium, the Library and Arts Center and the Aquatic Center. It could be argued that any one of those is better than another, but the new hospital project, which is privately funded, is by far the biggest and most expensive of the bunch.

Falls City Mayor Rodney Vandenberg, in addressing a large crowd at Sunday's ceremony, called it "the greatest project which has ever occurred in Falls City.

"We haven't built many \$21 million structures in Falls City and we probably won't build many more in the future. However, as important as the issue of healthcare, is the potential economic impact the project will have on our community," he said.

A one-story facility providing 24 patient rooms, a state-of-the-art surgery center, private specialty clinics, two delivery rooms with maternity suites, and Family Medicine Clinic will sit on 70 acres of CMC-owned land west of Old Highway 73. A road providing direct access from Highway 73 to the hospital campus will also be constructed. The projected grand opening date will be in November 2009.

A fund-raising effort led by Community Medical Center CEO Ryan Larsen has been well-received and so was Sunday's crowded ceremony. The theme of the event, developed and managed by CMC Marketing and Events Coordinator Linda Santo, featured four "cornerstones upon which we seek to build an enduring legacy of hope and healing."

Each cornerstone featured a specific value — community, knowledge, healing spirit, and vision — and a group of four representatives, each donning a gold-plated shovel. John Nixon gave the narrations during the official ground-breaking.

On the northeast cornerstone, symbolizing "vision" were: CMC Board of Directors President Rodger Merz; Abigail and Elizabeth Magdanz, twin daughters of Scott and Joan Magdanz, born on July 14, 1996, at the hospital; State Senator Lavon Heidemann; and Heartland Regional Medical Center (St. Joseph, Mo.) CEO Lowell Cruise.

On the Southeast cornerstone, symbolizing "community" were: Mayor Vandenberg; Southeast NE Telephone Co. Manager Beth Sickel; retired nurse and CMC Board of Directors Vice President Renie Gerweck; and Larsen.

On the southwest cornerstone, symbolizing "knowledge" were: Medical staff vice chairperson Dr. Sue Jennings; Richardson County Commissioner Jim Sefried; CMC Chief of Staff Dr. David Borg; building architect David Jann.

On the northwest cornerstone, symbolizing "healing spirit," were: Nebraska Hospital Association President Laura Redoutey; FC Ministerial Association President and First Presbyterian Church Pastor Roxie Sullivan; CMC charge nurse Cheryl Finck; and CMC Facilities Manager Phil Scheitel.

Senators Chuck Hagel and Ben Nelson, Governor Dave Heineman and Congressman Jeff Fortenberry were all invited, though unable to attend. Each penned letters of regret, which were read by local high school seniors Dylan Frederick, Rachel Bieker and Heather and Heidi Niedfeldt.

Both St. Paul's Lutheran Church Pastor Linda Daniels-Block and Msgr. Robert Roh of St. Peter & Paul Catholic Church offered prayers at the ceremony. The Falls City hospital was started by St. Paul's Lutheran church in 1918 and for many years managed by the Catholic Church, CMC Board of Directors President Rodger Merz noted.

Heidemann, just days removed from wrapping up the 100th Legislature, Second Session, in Lincoln, said people across the state are taking notice of Falls City.

“What you’ve accomplished in Falls City not only impresses me, but people all across southeast Nebraska,” Heidemann said. “You’ve developed a ‘can-do’ attitude and that’s what gets things done. I applaud you.”

Ground-breaking

**Falls City Mayor
Rod Vandenberg**

**CMC Board President
Rodger Merz**

**CMC CEO
Ryan Larsen**

