

# Odessa Memorial Healthcare Center News Update

Happy New Year Odessa Area Residents!

We at OMHC appreciate the opportunity to continue to serve you. Much has happened in 2016 and we look forward to an interesting 2017!

We are excited about the provider team that is currently on board and look forward to further solidifying the team in 2017. Rich Ervin, FNP-C and his family moved to Odessa and have been well received. Many of you have also come to know and enjoy Rhonda Freeman, FNP-C. She has contracted with us on a "long-term temporary" basis until a permanent provider can be recruited. Mary Klingner, MD sees patients in Odessa on a weekly basis and is also well liked by her patients. We are so fortunate to have these three incredible providers on the team. Andy Harris, MD continues with us on a monthly basis and is available telephonically for any questions the providers might have between visits. She carefully reviews the work of the providers at the clinic and at the hospital to ensure high quality care is consistently delivered to our patients.

We continue to recruit for additional healthcare professionals, especially nurses and nurse aides. In the interim, we are fortunate that we have long term contracts with excellent team members who have genuinely embraced our residents and staff and who enjoy working at OMHC. Our industry is constantly changing, and – especially due to the aging population – healthcare professionals of all kinds are in short supply and high demand. Our remote location and unique requirements add to the recruitment challenge.

The medical center made some sizeable and over-due investments in the physical plant in 2016. The boiler for the clinic building was replaced, as was part of the sidewalk at the front of the hospital entrance. Both items were in great disrepair. Thanks to the generosity of the community and the Odessa Healthcare Foundation, our very dated phone system was replaced as well.

***The board and management made several significant strategic decisions in recent months.*** First, with grant funding from the state, Health Facilities Planning was engaged to conduct a series of community forums and a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and to facilitate a strategic planning session with board and leadership. Second, was to suspend our efforts with regard to the federal "Meaningful Use" requirements. Third was the decision to keep taxes stable from those voted into place in 2016. Most recently, a decision was made to employ a competitive wage strategy in light of the large minimum wage increase in Washington.

***Community Health Needs Assessments*** are required for non-profit hospitals on an every three year basis. CHNAs are intended to identify needs or obstacles to the community being as healthy as possible and then and prioritize and identify the role of the hospital in addressing those needs. While this requirement doesn't apply to public hospital districts, CHNA's are often requested as part of grant applications and are a necessary planning tool to help healthcare providers place emphasis in the right areas relative to health promotion and provision of services. The community was invited to participate in several groups for input. OMHC leadership has recently received the draft report for review. Once approved by the board, it will be placed on our website for the public to view.

Based on the data collected, our draft priorities are :

- Assure access to care:
  - \* Based on the strong input of the community, preserve key services offered by the District including emergency services, primary care and long-term care.
- Recruit and retain providers as needed (mid-level or physician)
- As practicable, partner with community organizations including the school to support and encourage healthy behaviors, lifestyles and healthy aging.

OMHC will ***explore other Information Technology options***. When faced with an additional fees approaching \$150,000 for just the year 2017 to meet the next phase of federal “Meaningful Use” requirements, it became painfully evident that options must be evaluated. We cannot postpone compliance indefinitely, but also couldn’t see continuing with these tremendous outlays without taking a close look at options. In 2017 we plan to engage an expert in healthcare information systems to help us evaluate our needs in combination with the very onerous federal and state requirements. These systems and compliance requirements are highly complex and require thoughtful intervention by experienced healthcare Information Technology experts. It is anticipated that evaluation and conversion, if deemed the best option, would take at least two (2) years from project start. The District’s annual expense on Information Technology and assistance is currently approximately \$260,000 (and would have increased by nearly \$150,000 for 2017).

Perhaps the most notable strategic decision for you, the public, ***was not to request a tax increase*** on the February ballot. We are requesting essentially the same as the public voted into effect in the February 2016 election. As a reminder, each February the election votes in an amount that is actually collected in the following year. We believe that 2016 will end with less loss than budgeted and we hope to have a slightly positive bottom line in 2017. (Keep in mind that a large portion of the savings is coming from postponing compliance with the federal meaningful use standards mentioned above.)

Most recently, leadership approved a strategy to ***maintain competitive wages in light of the significant minimum wage increase (16% over 2016)*** in 2017 (\$1.53/hour). As an initial step, the adjustments will total approximately \$160,000. Due to our Critical Access Hospital federal reimbursement mechanisms, the actual net effect to the District will be approximately \$50,000 in 2017. The minimum wage will continue to increase at approximately 4-5% for two years, then another large \$1.50 jump will take place in January of 2020. Due to the shortage of healthcare professionals, to the sheer “trickle” effects and to the coming increases year over year, wages will need to rise correspondingly in order to retain and recruit staff.

2016 was a positive year for the District, and the feedback we heard during the community forums indicates that you, the community, sense real progress and positive momentum as well. Your support of our primary care, our staff, our emergency room and long term care, as well as for the hospital in general, encourages us every day. We recognize the importance of the hospital to your family and to the larger Odessa community. The team at Odessa Memorial Healthcare Center considers it an honor and a privilege to serve you. As always, please feel free to contact Mo Sheldon, CEO, with any questions or concerns at (509) 982-2611 or via email at [sheldomp@omhc.org](mailto:sheldomp@omhc.org).