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Hospital renovating to make all patient rooms private

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By Chelsey Levingston

In Mercy Health-Fairfield's last major building project, a patient tower was built on the Mack Road campus with expectations the hospital would one day need more room. As work finished on the patient tower's fourth floor, hospital officials decided to add a fifth floor, an empty shell set aside for future growth and expansion.

The fifth floor is an empty shell no more. The hospital is in the process of renovating patient rooms to make all rooms private, using the extra space in the patient tower to put new patient rooms. Previously, some patient rooms were semi-private.

Mercy Health-Fairfield Hospital celebrated Wednesday its finished renovation of the fifth floor of its patient tower, a multimillion dollar project. Mercy Fairfield is the city's third largest employer, with 1,082 full-time equivalent employees.

Twenty-nine private patient rooms for oncology services were built on the fifth floor, said Pat Davis-Hagens, Mercy Fairfield's chief nursing officer and chief operating officer. The rooms feature modular wall partitions to allow them to be changed or removed for medical equipment or future renovations. Each bedside has built-in vital sign monitors interfaced with electronic medical records, and electronic patient information boards.

"We really tried hard to say 'will we be happy with this in 10, 20 years?' and I think we will be," Davis-Hagens said.

Some empty space remains on part of the patient tower fifth floor, in anticipation of another future expansion.

Next year, crews will go back to finish renovation work on some existing patient rooms in other areas of the hospital to make them all private, Davis-Hagens said.

Work also continues on the renovation and expansion of Mercy Fairfield's Family Birth Center. The hospital added 21 postpartum units to the birth center. The next part of the project is to renovate the labor and delivery room, and add more nursery special care beds.

To fund the fifth floor renovation project, donor Pat Carruthers challenged the community to match his contribution, a significant but undisclosed amount.

Health care "is something we have to continually keep up with," Carruthers said. "I feel people too often are neglected to the point they can't give back."

Mercy Health Foundation President Todd Lindley said Carruthers gave the hospital a major gift, but told them half of the gift was at risk. The hospital had two years to find more donors to match half of the donation.

The point of the challenge was to broaden the hospital's donor base. Because Butler County's original Mercy hospital was in Hamilton, the hospital historically had a high concentration of Hamilton philanthropists. There were two hospitals for many years — Mercy Fairfield opened in 1978 and Mercy Hospital of Hamilton closed in 2001.

"Mercy's experience in Butler County has been so Hamilton focused," Lindley said.

The former Hamilton hospital site is currently being redeveloped for a riverfront park and arts project called RiversEdge.

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