what if





About this issue

It can be fascinating - and enlightening - to speculate about "what ifs." It might be business-related. (What if we added open heart surgery?) Or political. (What if Al Gore had won Florida?) Or historical. (What if Lee had won at Gettysburg?) There's even a name for the last type - "counterfactual history."

When we started thinking about "what ifs" for community hospitals, we came up with a pretty interesting list - so interesting that we decided to build this 2007-2008 Alliance report around the theme.

The answers to those "what ifs" illustrate the importance of community hospitals, their capacity for innovation and the incentives for supporting them. As financial and legislative threats seemingly increase, it's worth asking what life in Georgia would be like if community hospitals were not viable.

About the cover

What if your community hospital disappeared overnight? The cover photo of tornado damaged Sumter Regional Hospital in Americus, Georgia, illustrates an extreme and very real "what if" story. Read the full story on page 9.

GEORGIA ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITY HOSPITALS 2007-2008 MEMBERS

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Northside Hospital Northside Cherokee Northside Forsyth Phoebe Putney Health System Phoebe Worth Medical Center Piedmont Healthcare Piedmont Mountainside Hospital Piedmont Newnan Hospital Putnam General Hospital Satilla Regional Medical Center South Georgia Medical Center Southeast Georgia Health System Southeast Georgia Camden Campus Southern Regional Health System Southwest Georgia Regional Medical Center St. Joseph's/Candler St. Mary's Health Care System Stephens County Hospital Sumter Regional Hospital Tift Regional Medical Center Union General Hospital University Hospital Warm Springs Medical Center WellStar Health System WellStar Cobb Hospital WellStar Douglas Hospital WellStar Kennestone Hospital WellStar Paulding Hospital WellStar Windy Hill Hospital West Georgia Health System Wills Memorial Hospital



Letter from the President

COMMUNITY HOSPITALS DESERVE YOUR SUPPORT

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Dear Members and Friends.

Hard as it is to believe, it's now been nearly 25 years since a handful of community hospital executives got together and decided that Georgia's notfor-profit hospitals needed their own voice at the State Capitol.

The result was the creation of what is today the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals, and I was honored to be asked to organize and lead it.

Our original core mission was to defend the state's certificate of need system, and that remains at the top of our agenda. Indeed, a full quarter-century after our first legislative battle over CON, we find ourselves locked in yet another difficult CON debate with groups who are advancing special interest proposals that would dramatically curtail the access all Georgians now have to quality health care at reasonable prices.

Maybe that proves that the more things change, the more they stay the same. But I can tell you that a lot really has changed in the past 25 years, and that the Alliance has evolved and changed to meet new challenges that have arisen.

I have no doubt that our member hospitals are better off because of the Alliance and its efforts, but I also don't mind saying that the challenges we face today are more complex and difficult than ever before. Today we must address a range of issues that weren't even on the radar screen 25 years ago.

It is no exaggeration to say that the past several years have produced a virtual sea change in our political, regulatory and market environments. We still have many great friends under the Gold Dome, but we face the difficult task of educating a new generation of legislators who come to office with an ideological commitment to broad deregulation that seems blind to the hard facts and cold realities of local health care.

As this publication heads to press, we find ourselves at an impasse in CON negotiations with the physician community. In December 2007, the State Board of Community Health – despite warnings from its own attorney – rammed through a damaging rule change that would enable general surgeons to avoid the state's CON system and establish free-standing ambulatory surgery centers that would deprive Georgia's hospitals of one of the few streams of profitable revenue they have. The Alliance has gone to court to challenge this rule change.

Further, most Alliance members are still reeling from an ill-considered Medicaid Managed Care program that has clearly resulted in diminished access to care for many Georgians while cutting hospital reimbursements and driving up administrative costs – and which may ultimately cost the state several hundred million dollars in federal aid.

I remain confident that the Alliance and its members can meet and overcome these challenges, but it will not be easy, and it will require continued vigilance in the State Capitol and in the communities we serve.

Despite many obstacles, Alliance member hospitals continue to focus on their core mission of delivering quality medical care in their communities, and the Alliance is proud to honor, as we do every year, the winners of the 2007 Hospital of the Year competition. Their accomplishments are featured on pages 2 through 7 of this report, and I know you will find them inspiring.

Finally, the challenges we face in coping with the virtual "perfect storm" of governmental and legal issues pale in comparison to the task confronting Sumter Regional Hospital, which was basically destroyed on March 1, 2007 by one of the most powerful tornados ever to hit Georgia. We spotlight the impact that losing its hospital, however temporarily, has had on Americus and the surrounding area starting on page 9. The work that David Seagraves and his team at Sumter Regional have done in implementing a recovery-and-rebuilding program for their hospital should serve as an inspiration for us all.

Sumter Regional's tragedy is a vivid illustration that we cannot have strong communities without strong hospitals and this is all the motivation the Alliance needs to continue working hard to ensure that Georgia's hospitals have the resources to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Sincerely

Monty M. Veazey

President.

Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals





The 2007 GACH Hospitals of the Year represent community hospitals at their best and demonstrate how much can be accomplished when there's a commitment to innovative solutions.



A HOSPITAL TREATED THE WHOLE PERSON?

Carpenter and house painter Baron Saussy was working when two young women from the African-American Health Information and Resource Center told him about a health screening the next day, adding that African-American males are at higher risks for many diseases.

At the time, Saussy says, he was very tired, constantly thirsty and experiencing blurred vision. He'd been putting off seeing a doctor, but decided that the screening would be worth his time. The screening detected elevated blood sugar levels and other symptoms of pre-diabetes. Saussy received immediate help and a referral to a primary care physician.

The African-American Health Information and Resource Center and the African-American Community Health Initiative are just two of a host of programs sponsored by **St. Joseph's/Candler** of Savannah that demonstrate the organization's commitment to community service and a holistic approach to healing.

"St. Joseph's/Candler's commitment to the health of our community goes far beyond the four walls of our hospitals and well past our role as traditional health care providers," explains Paul Hinchey, president and CEO.

The organization's holistic approach focuses on factors such as safe and adequate housing, education, access to information and meaningful employment as essential for good health. Programs include:

- The Community Cardiovascular Council Partnership, which promotes cardiovascular disease prevention through risk awareness and screenings some in barber shops and beauty salons.
- The Georgia Infirmary, a leader in providing day health, case management for the chronically ill, housing for low and moderate income persons, and independence of the elderly and disabled Medicaid recipients with chronic illnesses.
- The Mercy Housing Partnership, an initiative with the Sisters of Mercy, which since 1996 has rejuvenated neighborhoods and developed quality, affordable housing for the economically disadvantaged.

Continued on next page

- St. Mary's Community Center, a community resource hub that provides work training, health education and screenings, clothing and food assistance, and housing refurbishment to the Cuyler-Brownsville neighborhood.
- A partnership with MedBank which provides free medication for chronic illnesses to those in need.
- The SmartSenior program, which offers seniors screenings, educational seminars, computer classes, a community merchant discount program, Medicare counseling, a travel club, Internet access, membership privileges on hospital services and programs, and a variety of special events.
- Williams Court Apartments, which provides affordable housing to those on limited incomes while serving many residents with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses.
- Angels of Mercy, a community volunteer corps, which assists with many community initiatives.

Left to right: Williams Court Apartments; fresh bread from the St. Mary's food assistance program; computer classes at The African-American Health Information and Resource Center.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program – VITA – which began four years ago at St. Mary's Community Center and processes tax returns for participants.

Efforts such as basic math and reading skill education, daycare and sick child services, credit counseling, Section 8 housing application assistance, PeachCare Assistance and Food Stamp assistance.

The holistic approach makes sense to Saussy.

"If all the big obstacles are gone, then there is no reason not to take care of yourself."





what if

THE HOSPITAL CAME TO THE PATIENTS?

Isabel Celio had no insurance and limited financial resources. Her nine-month-old daughter Celeste had a lingering cough.

Isabel pondered ways of caring for her child until a friend told her about **DeKalb Medical's** Wellness on Wheels (WOW) mobile health van. Isabel was able to meet the van at an apartment complex in Doraville and Celeste received medical care and recovered from a viral infection.

The Celio family is among the thousands of families who've received medical care that otherwise would not have been available.

"In DeKalb County, there are so many people who don't have access to medical care. They may be indigent, have no health insurance or simply lack transportation," says Wellness on Wheels Director Janet Rizan. "We offer screenings for them and try to connect them to primary care facilities which can help them."

The program, which began in 2000, provides services that include free immunizations for children and adults and free mammograms, breast cancer screenings, and screenings for blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol.

Following the screenings and immunizations providers on the van try to connect patients with primary care facilities. The program assists more than 3,500 people a year who otherwise would not receive these services.

The van travels to at least three sites in the community each week. Regular stops include apartment complexes with predominantly Hispanic residents, the Center for Pan Asian Community Services, and the Refugee Family Services Center. Staff members speak English, French, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

"We work with people who often are not familiar with our health care system," says Program Coordinator Genia Morse. "Many times they come to us because they just don't know where to turn."

DeKalb Medical invests about \$450,000 a year to buy and staff a mobile health van.



DeKalb Medical's Wellness on Wheels mobile health van on location

"We work with people who often are not familiar with our health care system. Many times they come to us because they just don't know where to turn."

The program is also funded through several grants, including a \$75,000 grant to DeKalb Medical from the Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

"DeKalb Medical was awarded a grant because the WOW van aligned with Komen Atlanta's goal of reducing social, cultural and financial barriers which prevent women from receiving breast cancer screening and diagnostic services," says Erin Justen, Komen Atlanta Community Outreach & Grants Manager.



A RURAL HOSPITAL DELIVERED BIG-CITY HEALTH CARE?

At a time when many small hospitals struggle to stay open, **Union General Hospital** in Blairsville flourishes by expanding services and facilities.

Union General's efforts have helped stabilize health care and preserved jobs in its north Georgia mountain service area. The hospital has helped patients avoid long trips by providing dialysis and cancer treatment. And a new medical tower is a state-of-the-art health care facility.

Union General offers services not usually found in small communities. Opened in 1959 as a small outpatient clinic, it is recognized today as one of the most progressive hospitals in Georgia.

During the past decade the hospital has expanded beyond its street address and added a series of outreach services and facilities for its broader service area including:

- A new 150-bed nursing home.
- A 25-bed critical access hospital and 112-bed hospital-based nursing home in neighboring Towns County.
 - A chronic dialysis center.
- A cancer treatment center that provides radiation therapy and medical oncology.
- A rural health clinic with an open-door policy and a commitment to treating the indigent, poor and uninsured.
- A new 80,000-square-foot medical tower with 45 private in-patient rooms, comprehensive Women's Services, a new clinical laboratory, four new operating rooms, a new five-unit Critical Care Department, a new



Left to right: The Union General Hospital campus in Blairsville; Technician Jeff Nicholson and the hospital's CT scanner

14-unit Emergency Department, a new Diagnostic Imaging Department with digital mammography and telemedicine and a new Central Energy Plant.

Union General Hospital also participates in the Home Visit Program for new mothers and babies after they leave the hospital, provides equipment for the School Nurse/Health Check Program, provides non-emergency transport service for Medicaid patients and operates the county's ambulance service.

A comment from one patient makes it clear that, for all of its growth, Union General hasn't forgotten the personal touch:

"Each and every person that assisted me during my stay performed their job with competence, professionalism and above all a caring attitude."

Union General Hospital Administrator Rebecca Dyer is justifiably proud.

"The working relationship with the hospital administration, board and physicians is the reason that Union General Hospital has been successful," she says.

"Based on our accomplishments, I don't think a better rural hospital exists in the state."



A HOSPITAL HELPED 900 PEOPLE LOSE 16,000 POUNDS?

High cholesterol. High blood pressure. Heart disease. Obesity. Diabetes.

Memorial Hospital and Manor in Bainbridge, like hospitals throughout Georgia and the Southeast, knows all too well what the problems are. The challenge is finding a way to make their community healthier.

"We're in southwest Georgia," explains Jan Godwin, director of public relations and volunteer services for Memorial Hospital and Manor, "People like their fried catfish and fried chicken."

But many of the residents of Decatur County also like to compete. And that is the key to the success of an innovative community health initiative focused on weight loss through increased physical activity and healthier eating.

The "Team Lean" community weight-loss initiative was sponsored by Memorial Hospital and Manor and the Bainbridge-Decatur County YMCA. Local businesses, churches, civic organizations and others were encouraged to form five-person teams for the 12-week program.

The rules were simple. Each team member paid \$5 for the first weigh in and \$5 for each subsequent weekly weigh in. If they gained weight, they kicked in an extra \$1 a pound. The money would go into a prize fund and at the end of 12 weeks, teams in the top 20% and the top five individual "biggest losers" – based on percentage of weight lost – would split \$64,000.

The hospital provided free blood tests and blood pressure screening to competitors, while the YMCA waived its \$100 membership fee. Competitors were encouraged to combine exercise, healthy eating and lifestyle changes and avoid fad diets.

Left to right: James Watts, the 2007 Biggest Loser, lost 111 pounds; A new 2008 team, the "Rug Rats" from Shaw Industries Group, Inc.

"Everywhere you went, people were talking about Team Lean," says Godwin. Indeed, the combination of competition, camaraderie and compensation captured the community. When Team Lean began on January 31, 2007, 1,020 competitors on 204 teams weighed in.

Among the teams: the "Port City Pounders"; "Five All-Beef Patties"; and, "Desperate House-Thighs." A team with members who are financial advisors called itself "Shrinking Assets." A team with a member who is a mortician called itself "Dead Weight."

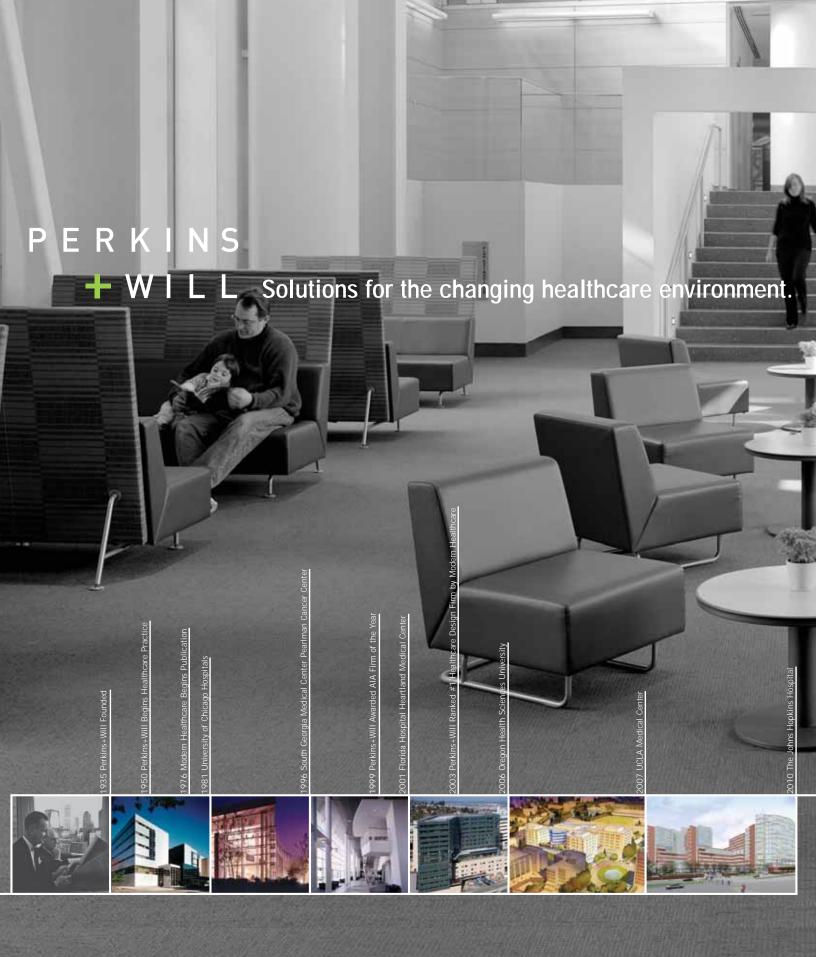
About 90% of the participants completed the 12-week contest and lost a total of 16,154 pounds.

Memorial Hospital and Manor Executive Director Jim Peak puts that total in perspective. "That's the equivalent of two Hummers, 68 refrigerators, five Toyota Camrys, 32 John Deere mowers, 22 Harley-Davidson Road Kings, or the same as 80 Jim Peaks."

The biggest loser was James Watts, who lost 111 pounds – or 31.4% of his body weight – by giving up fried foods, eating sensibly and working out. He won \$1,500 but gained far more.

"It's a wonderful thing, trust me," he says. "I feel wonderful."

But Team Lean didn't stop there. A six-month weigh in provided incentive for participants to continue their healthy diets and exercise. The top 20 biggest losers won \$250 each. And in late 2007 Memorial Hospital and Manor sponsored "warm up" nutrition and exercise classes to help people prepare for Team Lean II, which kicked off in January 2008 with 908 new participants.



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what if

YOUR COMMUNITY HOSPITAL DISAPPEARED OVERNIGHT?

Leonard Waitsman has lived in Americus for all of his 82 years. He and his wife of 59 years, Marie, are well known throughout their community, and many who are familiar with the couple speculate that their shared ability to make each other laugh is one of the secrets to the success of their marriage.

They have had their health challenges over the years like many people their age, but despite that, they manage to remain active through their church, Marie's charitable organizations and Leonard's involvement with the Americus Kiwanis Club.

Because of the kind of dialysis Leonard receives at his home in Americus, he has no choice but to travel to Albany to see a nephrologist that oversees his type of treatment. Making the long drive to Albany is something the Waitsmans could do without.

On March 1, 2007 an F-3 tornado ripped the walls and roof off of Sumter Regional Hospital and demolished the hospital's one-yearold HealthPlex diagnostic and community health center (shown here). Both facilities were declared total losses.

"It would be nice to be able to stay here in town for that," Leonard mused. "Believe me, at my age – or any age, really – it's difficult and inconvenient to make that long drive."

On March 1, 2007, an F-3 tornado with winds as high as 165 mph bore down on Americus, making a direct hit on Sumter Regional Hospital (SRH). After the terrifying storm passed, entire walls of the facility were gone, as were the windows, sections of the roof and medical equipment that had been sucked through gaping holes in the structure. A few blocks away, the SRH imaging and diagnostic facility, the HealthPlex at Sumter Regional, fared even worse – there wasn't anything resembling a building left in its place.

Two people located relatively close to the hospital lost their lives during the tornado. Miraculously, and thanks to SRH's fast-acting staff, the 53 patients at Sumter Regional Hospital survived. All were transported to other facilities in that area within four hours after the storm.

By the light of day, authorities surveyed the devastation throughout the city. Trees, when they weren't snapped off 25-feet in the air, lay strewn about like a dropped box of toothpicks. Cars were moved from their parked positions to completely different locations, and many were upended.

"My husband helped build up Americus," Marie said, "and to see what had happened to his hometown was so awful. Seeing what happened to our hospital was just heartbreaking. None of it seemed real, you know?"

On the morning after the tornado struck, the Georgia Department of Human Resources placed an expedited request for the delivery of inflatable urgent care facilities to

be delivered to Americus. The urgent care tents had originally been under consideration for emergency response urgent care facilities in the event of a biohazard outbreak. The State was able to request immediate delivery of a 50-bed field hospital consisting of five tents. The temporary urgent care tents were operational within five days and continued to serve the community well, despite the fact that they were not designed for a lengthy deployment as the primary community medical care facility.

On April 30, the setup and assembly of a 7,800 square foot modular facility was completed, providing 24-hour urgent care services, outpatient services including radiological, cardiopulmonary, pharmacy, clinical laboratory and physical, speech and occupational therapy. The modular units were special ordered and delivered from Pennsylvania. The Georgia Department of Transportation was helpful in securing waivers

for oversized transport of the units from Pennsylvania to Americus and assisted the City of Americus with facilitating the necessary site preparation activities.

As of late November, 39,000 patients had been seen in the modular facilities. Leonard was treated in the Urgent Care Center for low blood pressure on a few occasions since the storm, and was impressed with the quality care he received. "They did a great job, even in the tents," he said. "I got the same great service as I ever did before."

The MASH-style operation and the modular units would be the closest thing to a hospital that Sumter County would have until the opening of Sumter Regional Hospital East, an interim facility constructed out of COGIM units originally designed to provide temporary housing to the military. Sumter Regional Hospital East is the first time the COGIM units have been used to erect a community hospital.

As bad as the devastation was, there was never any doubt that the community's hospital would be rebuilt.

'MUCH WORSE OFF' WITHOUT A HOSPITAL

To understand the importance of Sumter Regional

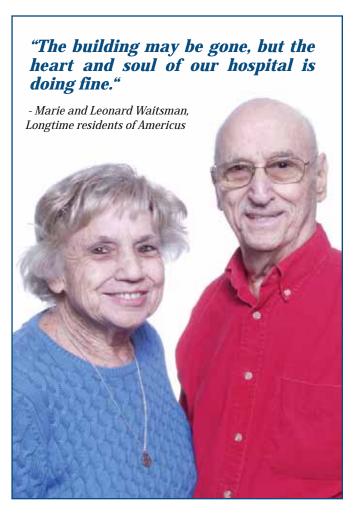
Hospital to the southwest Georgia region, one must understand the economics of the area. The numbers tell a story that emotional attachment to any institution cannot.

Not including the hospital, the tornado caused \$210 million in damage to the community. It destroyed or seriously damaged 217 businesses, residences. cemeteries, 10 churches, 1 fire station, 8 recreation facilities and 2 schools. Many residents lost both their homes and their places of employment. The impact on residents living in poverty without insurance coverage sustain economic survival is incalculable.

\$210 million in damage might not seem like a tremendous amount in this day and age, until you consider other factors. Sumter County lies within

the 2nd Congressional district, the 33rd poorest of 435 districts in the nation. Economically, Sumter County is classified as a Tier 1 County, the designation for the lowest economically developed counties in Georgia.

The most recent (2006) Georgia Department of Labor/Sumter County Area Labor Profile reported 2005 per capita income of \$24,431, which is \$6,510 per person below the state per capita income of \$30,914. In the FY2007 school term, 84% of Sumter County students qualify for the free lunch program – a frequently used indicator of poverty. When compared to 180 Georgia school districts, Sumter County ranked 11th in the highest percentage of students living in poverty.



Sumter County also suffers from severe economic deprivation, as well as extremely low educational and literacy levels among adults and children. The Sumter County Labor Profile reports that 30.3% of residents 18 years of age and over do not have a high school diploma or GED. In FY06, the Sumter County 9th – 12th grade dropout rate was 8.7% compared to a state average of 4.7%.

The ongoing overall decline in the country's automotive industry coupled with the impact of NAFTA regulations have also had a detrimental impact on the community's largest employers. In February 2007, a major manufacturing facility that once employed more than 1,300 citizens closed its doors after 30 years. Other manufacturing firms have downsized, moving production to other countries.

Prior to the storm, Sumter Regional Hospital was the county's second largest employer, with just over 700 workers. Only the school system employed more people.

Bill Bowen, chair of the Sumter County Board of Commissioners, sees a domino effect that the hospital provides to the community. "Take the nursing homes in our area as an example," he said. "When families are making decisions about their loved ones, having quality health care facilities is one of the most important things they look at. Without a hospital nearby, retirement facilities like Magnolia Manor and the Lillian Carter Nursing Home couldn't function efficiently – it becomes a question about the quality of life, but those nursing homes also provide steady jobs that stay here in Sumter."

The jobs provided by the county's retirement facilities and other industries do more than lower the unemployment numbers. "Of course Sumter Regional provides a wide range of good jobs for people, but the dollars that are created in payroll have a significant increase in value when they're turned back over and spent within our community," Commissioner Bowen said. "Without the hospital and the wages that are reinvested locally, this county would be much worse off."

'DIDN'T REALIZE HOW GOOD WE HAD IT'

The importance of physicians and highly skilled medical personnel to a community with a hospital seems like a nobrainer; however, the financial significance that physicians, radiologists, medical technologists, anesthesiologists and nurses bring to a place like Sumter County is striking.

Each physician injects about \$1.5 million into the local economy, annually. As a result of the March 1 tornado, two physicians in private practice have permanently relocated to other communities due to loss of business, loss of office facilities or hospital access. In addition, a number of physicians, physician assistants and nurse anesthetists that provided services to SRH patients under contractual arrangements have temporarily or permanently relocated to facilities in other towns.





From top:

Mayor Barry Blount (blue shirt) and President Bush survey the damage in Americus.

For two months a 50-bed medical facility operated out of five inflatable tents.

Nine months after the tornado, the community showed up to say goodbye to the hospital and watch wrecking crews begin demolition.





SRH employees were covered under the hospital's business interruption insurance and as a result, have continued to receive a paycheck for months following the destruction of their workplace. David H. Seagraves, Sumter Regional's CEO, and the hospital Board that approved the purchase of the policy could appreciate the value of such coverage easily enough, but no one could have possibly imagined that the policy would one day be used to pay hospital employees for as long as they have been paid. At the time this article was written (eleven months after the tornado), employees of Sumter Regional had not missed a paycheck since the storm.

But the business interruption insurance can go only so far. Many medical offices of the 39 physicians practicing at SRH were located either in the hospital complex or in close proximity to the hospital. Ten physician offices were completely destroyed by the tornado forcing physicians to relocate to inadequate temporary office space. Additionally, nine physician offices incurred significant damage requiring closure for lengthy periods for repair.

Since the storm, physicians have been forced to send patients to other hospitals in the region for inpatient service and clinical care needs, resulting in a loss of patients to out-of-town physicians. Thirty-two physicians who depended on SRH for revenue from patient admissions and services report their offices are suffering financial hardships as a result of the disaster. To supplement lost income some physicians are working in hospitals in other towns after hours and on the weekends, while others have reduced the numbers of employees or their hours worked, resulting in dramatically lower income levels for their practice and support staff.

Because of regulatory restrictions, such as the Stark Laws, hospitals are prohibited from offering financial subsidies to physicians in order to lessen the economic hardships that befall them in a time of crisis, such as the one SRH has experienced. And while lobbyists in Washington D.C.

important to this area to not rebuild. There is so much that is connected to Sumter Regional. The jobs that exist in this community extend far beyond the hospital's walls. It just doesn't work without Sumter

"The hospital is just too

Regional."

- Americus Mayor Barry Blount

continue to work tirelessly on Sumter Regional's behalf to have these restrictions lifted, physicians have no choice but to try to survive and keep their practices afloat.

Business leaders are keenly aware that without quality physicians, the community is in big trouble.

"Right from the beginning, the biggest concern I had was for the physicians – they're such an integral part of the community," Randy Jones, president and CEO of Sumter Bank & Trust, said. "They are very much involved, socially and civically. Almost immediately, the business community started to say, 'what can we do to keep these doctors here until the hospital is rebuilt?""

Not too long after the tornado, Jones's fears were beginning to be realized when a few highly regarded doctors left the community for other hospitals, including SRH's surgeons.

"We didn't have a financial mechanism in place to retain these physicians, mainly because we had never needed one until now. But the hospital's executive board, their lobbyists in Washington and our local and national government representatives have been working very hard to address this problem," he said. "So, we have really been caught between a rock and a hard place, but hopefully there will be a workable solution that will allow us to keep our doctors.

"We really didn't realize how good we had it, until the storm came and changed everything," Jones said.

REBUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Since the night of March 1, 2007, Americus has been in what Sherrill House, the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce chair, calls "rebuilding mode."

"The companies that are building back wouldn't be staying here if they thought that this county's core had been destroyed by that tornado," House said. "These businesses have opted to stay, rebuild and open again, and that speaks volumes about where people are putting their trust and faith – and fortunately, they're putting it back into this community."

Spiegel, the catalog-order giant, recently opened a call center in Americus – a decision that came after the tornado. Lowe's home improvement warehouse opened a facility in Sumter County last August. "The storm set a lot of things in motion that I think will make this a stronger, better community," House said. "As tragic as the tornado was, it might very well have given us a chance at a more economically sound place to live and work."

"We're optimistic, I guess you could say," Commissioner Bowen said. "As devastating as the tornado was, it has really brought out the best in our people. There is much greater cooperation between businesses and the various government agencies. I haven't heard of one dissenting voice regarding all of our rebuilding, especially the hospital's."

Bowen recently took a helicopter flight over Sumter County to survey the progress. In doing so, he couldn't help but reflect on a similar flight he took right after the tornado. "It is really amazing how quickly the businesses and homes have come back," he said. "It's just incredible, the rebuilding effort that has taken place. It was hard to imagine that this much could have been done since the first time we flew over the area."

of Bruce Springsteen fan message boards, the hospital's video shot into first place. On Jan. 25, Siemens announced that Sumter Regional Hospital would, in fact, receive a free Magnatom Essenza – a fundraising equivalent of nearly \$1 million.

While there is still a long way to go before things are "back to normal," House is convinced that Sumter Regional – in all its incarnations – will serve to heal and unite the community.

"I think it will be a day like no other that we've ever experienced, when the new hospital opens," she said. "It will certainly be a very emotional day. I think it will be...."



MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR

Sumter Regional Hospital will be rebuilt into a state-of-the-art, 21st century medical facility over the next three years. Although the new hospital is expected to have fewer beds – around 76, rather than the pre-storm 143 – the upgrades and improved technologies that will exist will far exceed what the previous hospital could provide to patients. In the meantime, Sumter Regional Hospital East will restore all but a very few of the same services back to this area. The interim facility will sustain this community until 2010.

Additionally, the hospital has gotten creative in its fundraising efforts: it entered a contest, sponsored by Siemens, for a free MRI machine. The contest required a 2-minute video message from entrants that explained why their facility deserved an MRI machine for free.

The support from the local community was enthusiastic. Word spread quickly, thanks to an e-mail campaign that was passed along far beyond the Americus city limits. Soon, television stations and newspapers throughout the southeastern U.S. were running stories about Sumter Regional Hospital's effort to win the contest. As the SRH story reached people throughout the country and world via e-mails, articles and even postings on a couple

When Sherrill House spoke again, there was a slight catch in her voice. "I just think there's so much that has gone into the rebuilding. The day the new hospital opens its doors, it will be much more than a brick-and-mortar thing – it will affect the personhood of every citizen in this community. In the end, it will show the strong fiber and the character of the citizens of Sumter County who I believe will see the rebuilding of this community through to a better and stronger one than it was before."

Leonard Waitsman agrees.

"I've said many times that the building may be gone, but the heart and soul of our hospital is doing fine. Sumter Regional is a wonderful place, even after the storm. I don't have anything to complain about except for my wife's cooking -- you wanna hear about that?"



Hospital Spans

Sumter Regional Hospital President and CEO David Seagraves, and GACH President Monty Veazey

H

GACH President Monty Veazey and Representative Mickey Channell



Hayslett Group CEO Charles Hayslett, Union General Hospital CEO Rebecca Dyer and GACH President Monty Veazey



Hayslett Group CEO Charles Hayslett, Memorial Hospital & Manor Executive Director Jim Peak and GACH President Monty Veazey

2007 Robert A. Lipson CEO of the Year Award David Seagraves - Sumter Regional Hospital

David Seagraves, president and CEO of Sumter Regional Hospital, Americus, won the 2007 Robert A. Lipson CEO of the Year Award. The 2007 award is the first to carry the name of Lipson, the president and CEO of WellStar who died on November 10, 2006 at age 60 from injuries suffered when his motorcycle collided with a car. The award recognizes Seagraves and the entire Sumter Regional staff for their heroic response to a tornado that destroyed the 143-bed hospital and portions of Americus on the night of March 1, 2007. Sumter Regional has made a remarkable recovery from the disaster and is nearing completion of a fully functional temporary hospital with 76 inpatient rooms, a full-service Emergency Room, and many of the medical services lost since the tornado. At the same time, Seagraves and the Sumter team have worked with their insurer, government agencies, elected officials and philanthropic groups to pull together funds to build a new hospital that is expected to open in 2010.

Legislator of the Year Representative - Mickey Channell

State Rep. Mickey Channell (R - Greensboro) was named Legislator of the Year. Channell is in his 15th year in the Georgia House of Representatives and is considered an expert on health care in Georgia. He is a life-long resident of House District 116 and a fourth generation Greene Countian. Channell authored the PeachCare for Kids legislation which secured affordable health care services for more than 200,000 children of Georgia's working families. He also is Vice Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and Chairman of the Health Subcommittee of Appropriations, which has oversight of the allocation of an \$8 billion state health care budget and helps determine funding for programs such as Medicaid managed care and the Indigent Care Trust Fund. During the 2007 session Channell introduced legislation (House Bill 581) to strengthen the state's certificate of need (CON) system by leveling the playing field and requiring all health care providers to go through the CON process. Later during the session, he made a procedural motion that sent a harmful CON bill back to the Rules Committee, effectively ending debate on the issue and preserving the CON process.

Small Hospital of the Year - Union General Hospital

Union General Hospital, Blairsville, was recognized as the best small hospital (fewer than 150 beds.) The Alliance recognized Union General for the rural hospital's decadelong expansion beyond its street address and the addition of a series of services not usually found in small communities, such as a chronic dialysis center, cancer treatment center and a new 80,000-square-foot medical tower with 45 private in-patient rooms, comprehensive Women's Services, a new clinical laboratory, four new operating rooms, a new five-unit Critical Care Department, a new 14-unit Emergency Department, a new Diagnostic Imaging Department with digital mammography and telemedicine and a new Central Energy Plant.

Small Hospital of the Year, Runner-Up - Memorial Hospital and Manor

Memorial Hospital and Manor, Bainbridge, won the first runner-up award in the small hospital category. The Alliance recognized Memorial Hospital and Manor's outstanding record during the past decade for innovative community programs that improve access for those who otherwise couldn't afford care. Among the programs cited was the unique "Team Lean" weight-loss competition, a community program that emphasized increased physical activity and healthier eating. More than 1,000 people signed up and about 90% of the participants completed the 12-weeks contest and lost a total of 16,154 pounds. Also cited was Memorial's "Camp Joy", a two-week summer camp for children ages 5 to 17 with cerebral palsy, autism, spinal muscular atrophy, sensory integration dysfunction, or developmental delay.

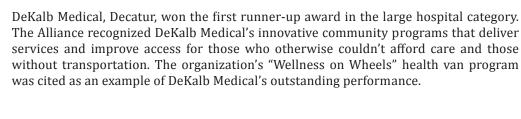


St. Joseph's/Candler Director of Government Relations Tarry Hodges and GACH President Monty Veazey

Large Hospital of the Year - St. Joseph's/Candler

St. Joseph's/Candler, Savannah, won GACH's 2007 Hospital of the Year award in the large hospital category (more than 150 beds). The Alliance recognized St. Joseph's/Candler for the organization's holistic approach to healing that is demonstrated in a broad variety of community efforts that include free computer classes, access to health information on the Internet, early detection of health conditions, housing for low and moderate income persons, income tax assistance program, basic math and reading skill education, daycare and sick child services, credit counseling, Section 8 housing application assistance, PeachCare Assistance and Food Stamp assistance.

Large Hospital of the Year, Runner-Up - DeKalb Medical





Back: Hayslett Group CEO Charles Hayslett and GACH President Monty Veazey Front: DeKalb Medical's Wellness on Wheels (WOW) Executive Director Janet Rizan, WOW program coordinator Genia Morse and President & CEO of DeKalb Medical Eric Norwood

AllPAC Contributor Awards

The Top Contributor award goes to Central Georgia Health System for raising the most funds by any hospital for AllPAC - Alliance Political Action Committee. St. Joseph's/Candler received the Most Improved Contributor award for increasing their total funds raised.

Hayslett Group LLC has been helping Georgia hospitals tell their story for more than a decade.

We have helped hospitals brand themselves, market their service lines, win competitive certificate of need battles, put together merger deals, organize regional cancer coalitions, manage sensitive crises, navigate political and governmental thickets, win legislative battles, even organize disaster recovery programs.

Over the years, our healthcare work has been recognized nearly thirty times by the communications industry. Recently, our efforts on behalf of the Save Georgia Healthcare coalition, in helping to defend Georgia's certificate of need system from a legislative attack, were honored by the Georgia Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America as the best public affairs, issues management and integrated communications work done in Georgia in 2007.



"The Hayslett team has been invaluable in our tornado recovery efforts.

Without their help, we simply would not have been able to effectively respond in a timely manner
to the communication and information needs of our many stakeholders."

– David H. Seagraves, President & CEO, Sumter Regional Hospital



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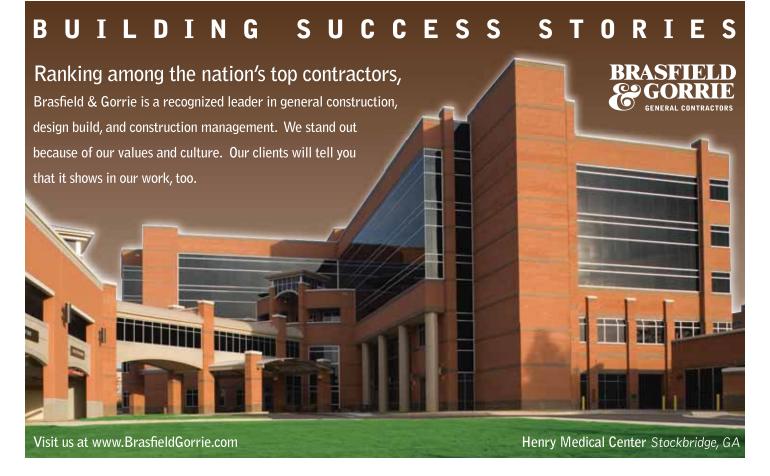
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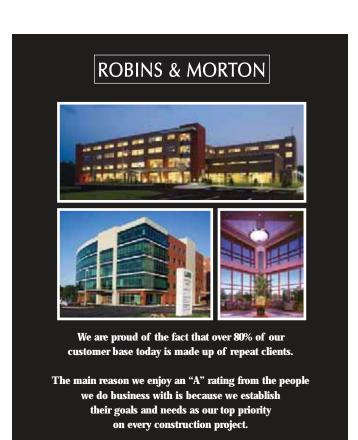
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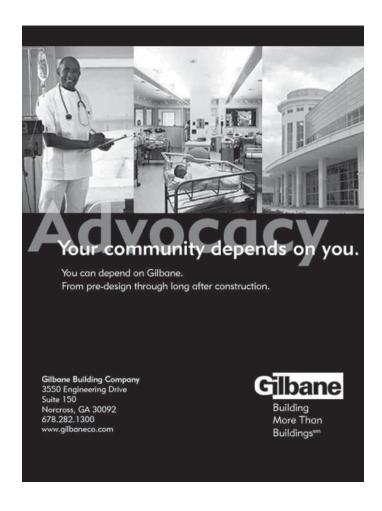
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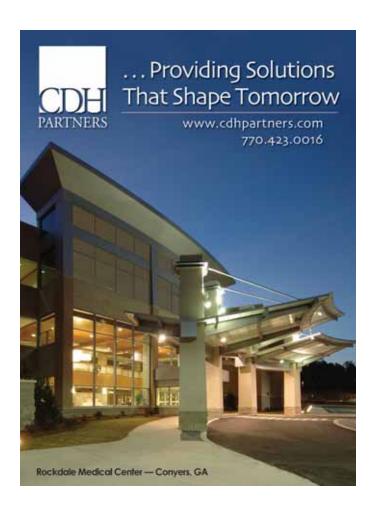


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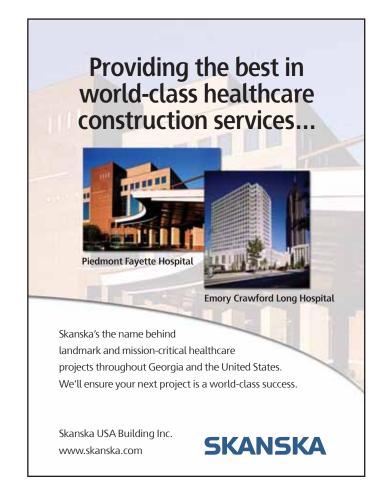
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