

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **dnj.com**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Apr 17, 2008

HEALTHCARE

MTMC breaks ground on new hospital

By CHASITY GUNN

cgunn@dnj.com

— Chasity Gunn, 615-278-5109

Nearly 400 people gathered Wednesday afternoon on Medical Center Parkway in Murfreesboro to celebrate a long-awaited birth.

It was an ideal day to be born — the sun beamed, a cool breeze blew, fireworks were released and a jazz trio played smooth tunes.

They were commemorating the birth of a new hospital — Middle Tennessee Medical Center.

Hospital officials broke ground on the new \$278 million, 560,000-square-foot facility, which is expected to be completed by August 2010.

"Actually, if you think about it, today probably is very similar to a birth," said Murfreesboro Mayor Tommy Bragg. "Today we recognize that we are going to bring a new facility into the world, and it's going to be a world-class facility."

The new hospital will replace the current 368,000-square-foot facility on North Highland Avenue in the downtown area. The number of beds will also increase from 216 to 286.

"The biggest thing for us is that the facility is going to be more accessible," said MTMC project director Jennifer Garland.

But that accessibility isn't just in terms of its location off Interstate 24 in Murfreesboro's Gateway district, but from when patients enter the front door to when they leave, she said.

The new facility will be "more patient and staff friendly" in its design, Garland said.

"It will provide a safe and efficient space for our staff so they can provide better patient care," she said.

She expects that patients will be seen in the new location by November 2010.

MTMC President and CEO Gordon Ferguson told those at Wednesday's ceremony that the new hospital will be a great addition to Rutherford County — even though hospital officials had to wait almost 10 years to get to this point.

Planning for the new facility started in 1998, he said.

"We never, never, never gave up," Ferguson said.

The hospital, which opened in 1927 with 37 beds, was originally known as Rutherford Hospital. In 1982, it changed to its current name. It was purchased by Baptist and St. Thomas hospitals in 1986.

MTMC got a \$10 million boost last December toward the project from the Christy-Houston Foundation, which was formed with proceeds from the sale of the hospital 22 years ago.

The foundation's grant will be given in \$1 million increments over the next decade. Ferguson accepted the first installment at Wednesday's ceremony.

The 21,000-square-foot emergency department at the new facility will be named in honor of the foundation.

The foundation previously gave the hospital \$5.4 million to buy the 68-acre site on Medical Center Parkway.

"We have waited a long time for this," said Cynthia Melton, assistant director in surgical services.

Melton has worked at MTMC for 24 years in the operating room.

"It's a big enough hospital to provide all of the services, but it's small enough that we're one big family," she said. "I really like it now that it's a faith-based organization. It's nice to know that you can go to work and talk about your faith."

Melton, who participated in the design phase, said the operating room will have a different layout.

"It's going to be a better design both for the patient and the staff," she said.

Ann Sloan, a nurse manager for patient care services, is also excited about the new building. But it's going to take getting used to being on the fifth floor rather than the second.

"It's going to be wide open spaces," Sloan said. "You can see outside everywhere. Right now, a lot of the rooms are facing a brick wall so it will be nice for every patient to have a beautiful view of the outside. That will be nice because no one wants to be there when you get right down to it."

Sloan, who has been at MTMC for 10 years, said the patient rooms will be bigger, the nursing stations will be smaller and there will be less chaos.

Sloan said she loves going to work every day.

"It's like a big hug when I come to work. It's caring. I ain't lying about it," she said.
