

## Hospital anchors \$16 million health industry

**Doctors, pharmacists all part of health sector**

by Mark Linsalata

Dr. John Warner Hospital serves as the anchor for a \$16.1 million local health-care industry that plays a major role in attracting and retaining residents and businesses in DeWitt County, a University of Illinois Extension study found.

"DeWitt County possesses a strong local health-care system," a report on the study said.

"In addition to its ability to meet the health-care needs of local residents, this system acts as a major cog in the local economy."

The report was presented last Thursday in the administration conference room of Dr. John Warner Hospital.

"One of the main points of our report is that the health-care system is a really important part of the local economic scene, and that they're interrelated," said Dr. Paul E. McNamara, a faculty member of the University of Illinois Extension and the department of agricultural and consumer economics of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

McNamara conducted the study and prepared the report with David Hancock, a staff member of McNamara's department.

Throughout his presentation of the report, McNamara pressed home the relationship of the health-care system and other parts of the local economy.

"They fit together," he said. "Health care contributes to the economic vitality both through quality of life and also through the jobs it provides and through that additional spending that economic activity provides."

In addition to gathering key economic data connected with Dr. John Warner Hospital, the county's three nursing homes, doctors' and dentists' offices, and other relevant statistical information, the researchers also conducted and analyzed interviews with at least a dozen health-care providers or others involved with the health care in the county.

Also assisting with the work, which was initiated through conversations between McNamara and Sheryl Hodges, the unit leader of the University of Illinois Extension for DeWitt County, was Mark Sterr, the hospital's business development director.

"David and I started working on this study back in February," Sterr said following the formal presentation of the report.

"It's been a long, involved process. It's not something that just happened."

Among the efforts was the creation of an economic model of the DeWitt County, which was used to determine the full impact of the health-care system.

For example, the basic economic data



Dr. Paul E. McNamara, a University of Illinois professor of agricultural and consumer economics and a faculty member of the University of Illinois Extension, and David Hancock, a staff member of McNamara's department, last week presented a report titled "The Health Care Industry in DeWitt County, Illinois."

showed that doctors' and dentists' offices, the hospital, the nursing homes and other health-care providers were responsible directly for 611 jobs. But using the economic model of the county, McNamara and Hancock estimated that there was an additional economic impact on the county, and that as a result the total number of jobs produced amounted to 748. Determining the additional economic impact of the health-care sector also was applied to the total amount of income produced by the sector and the amount of retail purchases related to it.

"We have about \$13 million in income that comes directly out of this sector in DeWitt County, and ... then we estimate the additional income that's created in the economy by the health-care sector activity, and we estimate that to be another \$3 million," McNamara said.

The result, he explained, is a total income of \$16.1 million generated by the health-care system in the county.

The importance of the hospital was underscored in many ways in the report:

- Access to a hospital acted as a key determinant in decisions made by businesses when considering a relocation to DeWitt County.

- Of all parts of the health-care system, the hospital was the largest employer and provided incomes directly amounting to \$5.14 million.

- Because of the other jobs created by the hospital's high number of employees and the services sought by the hospital, McNamara and Hancock calculated the total income produced by the hospital at \$6.37 million, more than one third of the \$16.1 million in total income estimated for the local health-care industry.

- The hospital's total contribution to retail sales in the county based on the purchases made because of the direct and indirect incomes provided by the facility amounted to \$2.37 million, nearly half of the total of \$5.99 million in retail purchases attributed to those in the health-care industry.

However, some of the findings associated with the interviews, particularly in connection with the hospital, were disturbing.

For example, one health-care professional said that because the hospital offered no surgical services, that all the clients of that health-care provider were sent outside of the community for surgeries.

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## 'Ambassadors' helping Angel Tree find 'Angels'

by Mark Linsalata

The Angel Tree project is off to an early start in its seasonal search for "Angels," partly because the organization is anticipating as many as 200 more youngsters who will need Angel Tree's help if they are to have gifts under the tree this Christmas.

Adding to concerns that more families in DeWitt County will be financially hard-pressed to provide presents for their youngsters this Christmas is the idling of the workforce at Thrall Car Manufacturing Co., Angel Tree volunteers said.

Last year the number of youngsters helped by Angel Tree numbered 536, and that was nearly 100 more than the year before. This year as many as 700 youngsters are expected to be eligible for Christmas presents from Angel Tree.

"Every year it has gone up, and that was before the Thrall layoffs," said Sue Calvert, an Angel Tree volunteer.

There's just been a lot of people who are laid off from work."

Adding extra punch to this year's fund drive will be members of the Clinton Community High School Ambassadors' Club.

"We're going to do fund-raisers for Angel Tree, and we're going to be in the Farmer City and Clinton Christmas parades," said Caitie Breeze, 17, president of the club.

The involvement of the club, which is sponsored by Lisa Perkins, secretary to the athletic department, is an expression of Angel Tree's push for greater participation in the Angel Tree project by schools and students in the area.

"We're working with the kids to help us

to find other kids, their peers, who don't have anything," Calvert said.

She explained that there will also be a key role for teachers and school administrators, too, this year.

"We're trying to have the schools help us identify the children in need," Calvert said. "We're trying to make sure all kids have something for Christmas."

Additionally, Country Junction, located at Routes 54 and 51, and Graves' Stationers on Mr. Lincoln's Square are donating the proceeds of sales of a special Boyd's Bears Christmas Teddy 2002.

Each purchase of the \$9 bear, who is holding a red star with Christmas 2002 on it, will mean a donation of \$5 to Angel Tree.

"There is a large need for Angel Tree in the community," said Julie Hinds, owner of Country Junction.

The monetary donations that come from the sales of the Christmas bears are particularly important, Angel Tree volunteers explained, because half of Angel Tree children aren't adopted, and they receive presents on Christmas because Angel Tree volunteers by them gifts with the donations.

Another item to be sold to benefit Angel Tree will be Angel Tree long-sleeve T-shirts. The shirts can be ordered at Country Junction and picked up at Locker Room Sports. Angel Tree supporters are asked to wear the shirts during "Tree Days," which will be Fridays throughout the holiday season.

See Angel, page C2



Julie Hinds, owner of the Country Junction, held Tia Calvert, 1, as she joined Caitie Breeze, 17, president of the Clinton Community High School Ambassadors Club, to kick off the Angel Tree project for Christmas 2002. Hinds and Breeze were holding Boyd's Christmas 2002 teddy bears.

# HOSPITAL, from C1

"The transfer of patients was not due to the complexity or special nature of the required surgeries," the report said.

Instead the cause of the transfers was that the health-care provider was unaware of the large number of surgical procedures that can be performed at the hospital.

"I would like to know who that was," Mayor Tom Edmunds said after hearing about the lack of information expressed by that health-care provider.

However, the report also noted that another health-care provider believed the hospital lacks audiological services, even though specialists in that field are available regularly at the outpatient clinics of the facility.

"What we need to do is to educate them better," the mayor said upon learning about the lack of knowledge about what's available at the hospital even among health-care providers.

The interviews also revealed that some sought services outside the community because of a perception of inadequate care at the Dr. John Warner.

"An issue on the perception of some is that the hospital is too small," McNamara explained. "Some people use the word Band-Aid station."

The problem, McNamara explained, has to do with a lack of information of what is actually available at the hospital, and an assumption that something is better because it's in a larger city.

"We know from our

research and our work that for most things that are primary-care related there is no evidence of that," McNamara said.

Other interviews, particularly among those who had been treated at the hospital or had other exposure to the hospital, offered far different views about the facility.

"Residents with exposure to the hospital, both directly and indirectly, had only positive comments to say about the services," the report said.

Some reported better care than at larger hospitals in surrounding community. "Other community members made reference to specific stories and example of how the hospital had saved the life of a friend or family member," the report said.

Still, the report noted, limited interaction with the hospital throughout the community resulted in limited knowledge of the hospital's services and negative perceptions of them.

"We continually have to educate the population, and that's a marketing situation for the hospital," the mayor said following the presentation.

In addition to other marketing efforts, including the hospital's new newsletter, the report specifically recommended that the hospital hold health-care fairs and health-care screenings, which the study suggested "could prove more effective at reaching the community."

Another factor addressed in the report and in the presentation was the problems faced by the hospital because near-

ly one in three people works outside of the county. What that sometimes means is that their health insurance plans do not include the hospital.

An example brought up following the presentation was John Deere Health Care Inc.

"John Deere will not touch us," Sterr said. "They don't need to contract with us. They have a big enough base."

However, McNamara said that individuals could speak up about the situation with their human resources departments on the job.

"Nothing much can be done unless employees complain about it, and groups of employees have to complain," McNamara said.

Another suggestion made by McNamara in his presentation was encouraging health-care providers and the hospital to participate more in rousing the interest of area young people to enter health care careers.

Among other things he suggested job shadowing of health-care providers or hospital staffers by young people from the high school and also joining with community colleges to provide technical training.

The result would be more health-care dollars staying within the community.

"Work with your local high school kids who have an interest so they can learn more about and find a niche for themselves in health care," McNamara suggested.

He also recommended that health-care providers themselves become more



DCC/Gordon Woods

Dr. John Warner Hospital plays the primary role in the health-care industry in the county, as the fourth largest employer in the Clinton area, providing incomes amounting to \$5.14 million.



DCC/Gordon Woods

Doctors and other health-care professionals at organizations like the Clinton OSF Medical Group contribute to the strength of the health-care sector in the county's economy.

involved with economic development generally in the community. Without new jobs, income levels could fall, and it could result in a loss of part of the current health-care system, he explained.

He suggested that health-care providers could work with the busi-

ness community in supporting development efforts.

"I think that is a valuable role for local health-care leadership," he said. "It's not their main job, but it's one thing they can do that is also going to help their health-care sector in the future." ■

# ANGEL, from C1

The T-shirts will feature the Angel Tree logo, which depicts an ordinary child as an angel and was initially sketched by Rosamond "Roz" Fields of Clinton when she was a fourth-grader. She is now freshman at North Park University in Chicago, where she is majoring in psychology.

This year there will be a contest for a new Angel Tree drawing that will be used on the organization's publications and on future T-shirts.

The prize has yet to be decided, but contest forms will be going out soon to schools, and the competition will be open for children in kindergarten through fifth grade.

The youngsters helped by Angel Tree generally come from families whose incomes fall below the poverty level, often because of layoffs, illness or other similar factors.

The youngsters are referred to the program by agencies such as Community Action, Public Aid, the DeWitt County Human Resource Center, Dove Inc. and the DeWitt-Piatt Bi-County Health Department.

Additionally, referrals are also being sought, Calvert said, from ministers, school teachers and administrators and health-care professionals. The Clinton Area Ministe-

rial Association is also working with Angel Tree to identify families who qualify and children who will need presents this Christmas.

"The ministers are extremely supportive," Calvert said. "They are going to help us identify children for Angel Tree, and through their churches, they are going to get children adopted."

By "adopting" children through Angel Tree, individuals and groups can become "Angels," the people who sponsor one or more children and provide them with Christmas presents.

Angel Tree provides those adopting a child a "wish list" from the family that gives the youngster's sizes and includes a prioritized listing of the child's clothing needs, in addition to a description of the special toy the youngster would be happy to see under the Christmas tree this year.

Because only about half of the children referred to Angel Tree are adopted each year, the others are helped through monetary donations received by Angel Tree. Those funds are used by Angel Tree volunteers to purchase clothing and other gifts for the youngsters so they'll have presents at Christmas. ■

# Becoming an 'Angel' in Angel Tree project

by Mark Linsalata

Names of children and wish lists for them are already available for those who want to be "Angels" and to ensure that youngsters from financially strained families have gifts under the tree this Christmas.

To become an "Angel" involves following a few easy steps, including:

- Calling the Samaritan Room at (217) 935-0954, where a message can be left, to adopt a child. Also, Sue Calvert may be called at home at (217) 935-3474, or a fax may be sent to Angel Tree at (217) 935-0954.

- Selecting a child from a list provided by Angel Tree, which contains referred children from Community Action, Public Aid, the DeWitt County Human Resource Center, the DeWitt-Piatt Bi-County Health Department, the Clinton Area Ministerial Association, school administrators and teachers, and health professionals. The names of the youngsters are confidential, but the youngsters' ages and genders are provided. Parents of the children must show financial documents proving their income is below 100 percent of the federal poverty level, which is generally done by bringing in a payroll stub from the past 30 days.

- Receiving a "wish list" for the child. On these

lists, parents are asked to prioritize the child's clothing needs - coats, clothes, shoes, etc. - and to describe the child's special toy request. Angel Tree volunteers say the special toy is just a wish of the child and that any age-appropriate toy will be greatly appreciated.

- Deciding how much to spend is up to the "Angel." Also, there is no requirement to buy everything on the wish list, which is why parents are asked to prioritize them. Those lists will have the color, sizes, description of items, child's height, weight and age.
- Delivering the gifts to the Clinton Elks' Lodge on Dec. 9 from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

One tip offered by Angel Tree volunteers is for a group to adopt a child and split up the purchases on the wish list among the members, thereby keeping individual expenses down and giving many the opportunity to participate.

Another option is a monetary donation. These donations are needed in all amounts, Angel Tree volunteers say. The funds are used to buy gifts for children who are not adopted. Last year, about 250 of the 536 youngsters who were helped received gifts purchased with donated funds. Angel Tree volunteers usually spend \$50 to \$75 per child, depending on the child's

needs and the donations received.

Donations may be mailed to DeWitt County Samaritan Room/Angel Tree, P.O. Box 258, Clinton, Ill. 61727.

Checks should be made out to The Angel Tree Fund.

Donations may be delivered to the First National Bank at the main bank only, in care of the Angel Tree Fund/Samaritan Room, at 400 South Side of Mr. Lincoln's Square in Clinton. Susan Piatt may be seen for help at the bank.

Or donations may be delivered to the Farmer City State Bank, care of the Angel Tree Fund, at 333 S. Main St., Farmer City.

Volunteers are needed to help shop, to get out mailings, to provide publicity or to serve on the committee. To volunteer, call the Samaritan Room at 935-0954 or Sue Calvert

at 935-3474. Volunteers are particularly needed at the Elks' Lodge on Monday, Dec. 9, and for the distribution of the gifts, Tuesday, Dec. 10.

Donations of food gift certificates, gift wrapping paper, any new toys, new children's coats, new clothes and new shoes or used toys in good condition can be dropped off at the Elks' Lodge on Dec. 9.

To obtain information or to have presentation on Angel Tree at an organization or church service, call the Samaritan Room at (217) 935-0954 or call Sue Calvert at home at (217) 935-3474. ■



DCC/Mark Linsalata

Purchasing these Boyd's Christmas 2002 teddy bears at either Country Junction or Graves' Stationers adds to the funding for Angel Tree. The sale of each bear means \$5 goes to Angel Tree.

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