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12/9/2009 5:05:00 PM

St. Dominic's pushes need for south Madison hospital

By STEVEN G. WATSON
 Associate Editor

MADISON - Firefighters saving the life of a boy whose mother stopped at a fire station instead of driving into Jackson to a hospital exemplifies the need for an emergency room in south Madison County, say executives at St. Dominic-Jackson Memorial Hospital who are proposing a \$121 hospital here.

The Jackson-based hospital is pushing for the transfer of 71 beds to a new facility just north of Madison, east of Interstate 55 along Parkway East and north of the proposed Reunion interchange.

A Certificate of Need (CON) has been filed and the state Department of Health will hold a hearing in February.

Hospital officials are trying to build public support to justify the CON and have a web site www.mystdommadison.com where residents can get information and sign a petition in support of the facility.

St. Dominic's officials say the facility is long overdue and will provide south Madison County's fast growing population with better access to quality health care and emergency services.

St. Dominic's Executive Vice President of Operations Lester Diamond relayed the story about a young boy on his son's soccer team who ate something and had an allergic reaction to it.

"The boy couldn't breathe and not knowing what to do the mother drove him to the fire station instead of calling an ambulance or driving into Jackson to find an emergency room," Diamond said.

Turns out that was a good decision as most Madison firemen double as paramedics and they were able to stabilize him until he could be treated at a local hospital.

"This exemplifies the need for better emergency services in south Madison County," Diamond said. "Depending on the traffic it could take 45 minutes to get from Madison to a hospital in Jackson. That's way too long."

Diamond and other officials at St. Dominic's contend that the level four emergency room included in the hospital's plans would save lives and is desperately needed.

"In those types of emergencies time becomes very critical," Diamond said.

Along with an emergency room, plans for the new St. Dominic's facility call for a 60,000 square foot building with 65 beds for acute medical/surgical and intensive care and 6 labor and delivery suites.

As a full-service facility, it will also provide surgery and recovery, imaging and laboratory and outpatient services.

The proposed plan is a re-location of beds from St. Dominic's Jackson facility and will not add to the 535 beds St. Dominic's is licensed for.

Currently the county's only hospital is the 67-bed Madison County Medical Center in Canton run by Health Management Associates (HMA).

HMA recently broke ground on a new \$42 million facility scheduled to open in 2011 off of Nissan Parkway south of Canton.

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