

GMH upgrades mammography to digital unit

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Hospital receives \$558,000 from Helmsley Trust fund.

Gothenburg Memorial Hospital will receive \$558,170 for a new digital mammography unit.

GMH administrator John Johnson said the hospital will receive the money for the \$799,620 project through the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust in New York City.

Hospital officials were notified June 22 that GMH received the grant.

Johnson said the hospital will pay the balance—\$241,450— through in-kind participation such as renovating the existing mammography room to accommodate the new equipment.

Computed radiology uses phosphor plate detectors instead of film in X-rays.

“The quality of the image is almost immeasurable to what we have now,” he said about the mammography equipment. “It’s the most modern high tech equipment on the market today.”

Johnson noted that digital mammography creates clearer images than analog which means that abnormalities or cancer in the breast may be detected sooner.

“The digital image has different degrees of depth even though you can’t change what’s there,” he explained. “But you can enhance it in different ways.”

Julie Koehler, GMH imaging supervisor, said the equipment means better quality service and imaging.

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Grant money is expected to arrive in a couple of months so the equipment can be bought and operational by or during October which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The hospital plans to advertise the new equipment and promote awareness of breast cancer—especially during October.

Johnson said he was notified by trust officials who wanted to know if the hospital was interested in applying for a grant.

Getting the application ready took about six weeks, he said.

Several hospitals in Nebraska—including Cozad Community Hospital—were awarded grant money for mammography equipment.

With the new equipment in place, Johnson said he hopes lives will be saved and suffering eliminated from south-central Nebraska—especially in the GMH service area.

In the grant application is a mission statement that GMH wants to reduce cases of breast cancer by 50% in its service area over the next five years.

What that means is increasing mammographies at the hospital from 425-450 on average annually to 700-800.

That number includes both genders since 5% to 8% of breast cancer is detected in men, Johnson said.

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The high quality image possible through the new equipment is especially important, he said, because women's breasts become denser as they age.

Johnson added that the current mammography equipment is about 11 years old.

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