

County's VIPs get first look at MTMC 'gem'



JOHN A. GILLIS/DNJ

People fill the main lobby of the new Middle Tennessee Medical Center during its Grand Opening VIP Celebration on Thursday. The evening included dinner, music and a fireworks display.

Hospital a 'banner moment for our community'



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Michelle Arnold gives her keys to Justin Guthrie of Valet One as she arrives outside the new MTMC for its Grand Opening VIP Celebration on Thursday. At right is her daughter, Angel Arnold.

BY SCOTT BRODEN
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The new Middle Tennessee Medical Center resembled Hollywood's Oscar night Thursday as many government and business leaders came out for a black-tie corporate celebration.

They arrived in tuxedos and evening gowns as they dropped off their cars for valet parking in front of the \$267 million hospital on Murfreesboro's Medical Center Parkway.

"This is a cornerstone of our community," said Stephanie Brackman, the vice president of operations for the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce. "It will seal Rutherford County as a health care corridor for Middle Tennessee. We are extremely blessed to celebrate this gem in our community."

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The hospital will hold another celebration for the community from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, and the ribbon cutting ceremony will begin at noon.

The new MTMC will open for patients Oct. 2.

Thursday's event included a performance from contemporary Christian singer and songwriter Michael W. Smith, and a fireworks display followed.

The new hospital offers 286 beds in a seven-story, 550,000-square-foot building. The existing MTMC has 225

beds in a 335,000-square-foot building on Highland Avenue, close to downtown.

The hospital was able to build to its new home on 68.3 acres off Medical Center Parkway after buying the land from the city of Murfreesboro in January 2003 for about \$5.4 million. The deal included \$3 million coming from the Christy Houston Foundation, an organization founded several years ago after St. Thomas Health Services acquired MTMC.

"This is a banner moment for our community," said Murfreesboro City Councilman Shane McFarland, who attended the event with his wife, Ashley. "The commit-

ment that the hospital, the city and the donors have made to make this a reality shows what a great community we have. Rutherford County is blessed to have such a great facility to serve its residents."

Many other officials attended, including Murfreesboro Mayor Tommy Bragg, City Manager Rob Lyons and MTMC President Gordon Ferguson. Former hospital presidents Jim Arnhart, who oversaw MTMC from 1954 to 1986, and Art Hastings, who was in charge from 1986 to 2002, were also present.

State Rep. Joe Carr, R-Lascassas, described the new hospital as being beautiful.

"I'm real proud of Gordon Ferguson and the Board of Directors for putting this together," said Carr, who attended the event with his wife, Ginny. "It's going to be a tremendous asset for the community."

Rutherford County Health Department Director Dana Garrett agreed that the new hospital offers a great upgrade for health care.

"It has a lot of detail in thought to the layout," said Garrett, who's a registered nurse. "It's both beneficial to patients and medical staff. Our community is very blessed to have such a wonderful facility."

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