

Middle Tennessee Medical is on the move

Hospital prepares for relocation

By SARAH FRYAR
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On April 16, 2008, Middle Tennessee Medical Center held its groundbreaking ceremony for the new location on Medical Center Parkway.

A little over two years later, MTMC is ahead of schedule and preparing for "the big move" in October.

The relocation from the old hospital at 400 North Highland Avenue, referred to as "400" to the new hospital at 1700 Medical Center Parkway, or "1700", was originally planned for November. MTMC staff and associates have been working on the moving process for over a year.

MTMC Move Strong Relocation Director and Director of Medical Imaging & Radiation Therapy Steve Clevenger, who has participated in hospital relocation before, said they are hoping to draw the number of patients at the 400 location down between 130 and 150 on move day. Surgical red line dates and interventional exams and procedures will help dwindle the populace.

"Oct. 2 is the magic day. The plan is to open this (new) building first with the new associates around 2 a.m. that Saturday. They will start reporting here, we'll start doing last minute checks of the departments, get over the excitement . . . and start bringing the hospital alive," said Clevenger.

There will be a command center over each hospital and then one covering both. Around 5 a.m. the center over 400 will run a last minute census to identify

who is in that hospital and then assign each patient a bed at 1700.

Before they are transported, patients will receive a color-coded tote bag containing their record and any medication they may need on route. This tote will match the color-coded floors at the new MTMC to ensure patients are placed on the right floor, in the correct bed and confidentiality is protected.

Twenty Rutherford County ambulances, which were donated by the county, and a handful from Saint Thomas will be waiting outside of 400 to begin transportation. A small number of the general patient population will first be taken to 1700, followed shortly by the high risk patients of intensive care, neonatal intensive care and neonatal units.

After discharge teams clear each patient at 400, the EMS units will transport them by traveling the designated route along Memorial Boulevard and over Broad Street to 1700. Admissions teams will be waiting at the main entrance to deliver patients to their assigned rooms.

ICU and NICU patients will have physicians, physician's assistants and/or registered nurses from those particular departments by their side from the room at 400, in the ambulance and to the room at 1700.

"At 5:30 a.m. we will be operating two hospitals fully. It will take everyone we have to run both hospitals; operating rooms, medical imaging departments and laboratories. Everyone will have to be here. We've even had to get people in the system from Nashville to help as well," said Clevenger.



MTMC staff and RCEMS practice transferring a model patient from 400 N. Highland to the new MTMC. Photo provided.

Simultaneously, a message will be sent out to all EMS units that 1700 is open and any ambulance patient will be taken there. If a patient walks in the emergency room at 400 before it has closed, they will be treated there before their placement is determined.

After the very last patient is transported from the old building, it will officially close and the doors will be locked.

If someone needing treatment arrives at 400 after it has been shut down, there will be signs on the doors redirecting them to the 1700 location. Also, MTMC will have road signs leading directly to 1700 via Bell Street for those who are unfamiliar with the Murfreesboro area.

Because incoming patients will use

the main entrance, the public relations department will assist patient family members through a separate entrance and up to the specific floor.

An access point will be set up, in turn, for those who let curiosity get the best of them and wander in during this chaotic occasion.

Clevenger expressed hopes in having the relocation completed by 2 p.m. that Saturday.

"If that's the case, probably shortly after that we will have all the help leftover from 400 come over to 1700 as needed and the people from Nashville will probably leave at that time. . . . We want to get the building operating normally as fast as we can," he said.

Most equipment from 400 will also be leftover as new resources were brought in for 1700. MTMC has a team in charge of overseeing the furnishings and equipment and finding those who have the means for it.

After checking with the other hospitals in the system, local organizations the medical center supports like Special Kids Inc. will see if there is something they can use. The remaining equipment may eventually be available for bidding.

Meanwhile, MTMC and participating ambulance companies are practicing the move with mannequin patients.

"One interesting thing people don't know is that we have already practiced two patient moves. . . . In August, we're

then going to move about 10 pretend patients all at the same time with several ambulances running back and forth practicing the whole thing," Clevenger said.

In addition, the hospital is taking the time to keep Murfreesboro residents residing in the areas who will be affected on move day in the loop.

"This is a big deal," Clevenger said. "Not many people get the chance to be a part of a hospital move."

"We plan on having our PR department send out postcards to the neighborhoods to remind them early on [Oct. 2] we are going to start moving patients and to please be careful when they are backing out of their drive ways and watch out for the ambulances," Clevenger added. "If there are 150 patients in the hospital, that's 300 ambulance trips. That's a lot of traffic up and down through there so we really need Murfreesboro's help in making this a safe move."

Anyone interested in more information or a sneak peak at the new Middle Tennessee Medical Center can attend the open house celebration from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. Sep. 25 at the 1700 Medical Center Parkway location.

The main lobby and one patient room will be open for tours along with food, games and fun for families.

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Left behind - What to do with the old MTMC?

With MTMC's move to Medical Center Parkway, the city of Murfreesboro was left with decisions to make with what to do with the buildings left behind on North Highland Avenue.

"We have a question of how the offices left over there are going to survive and we're looking at opening it up to a broader use," Murfreesboro Planning Director Joseph Aydelott said.

Many of the property owners located along Highland Avenue, an area zoned for medical offices, are concerned about how the hospital's move will affect their ability to rent space.

As of now, the city of Murfreesboro plans to adjust the medical office zoning to zoning for general office space.

This should help give property owners flexibility to fill their space.

A suggestion was made to open zoning for use as restaurants as well, but at this time the planning committee has no zone for this use.

With no official word on what will be done with the building that MTMC leaves behind the city's hands are tied.

The building may be handed over to MTSU, but until an official decision is made the city must wait on any zoning changes that need to be made.

"We've been working on this process for a long time," Aydelott said.