

ON THE RECORD

A WEEKLY Q&A WITH RUTHERFORD'S MOST INFLUENTIAL



JOHN A. GILLIS/DNJ

MTMC President and CEO Gordon Ferguson sits in the new hospital's chapel on Friday. Ferguson says the chapel and an outdoor healing garden are two of the premier features that have been incorporated into the hospital's design and mission.

New MTMC expands accessibility to care

Hospital expected to become regional destination

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The new Middle Tennessee Medical Center is on the brink of opening after 12 years of work.

Gordon Ferguson, president and CEO, sat down with The Daily News Journal to talk about the hospital's opening and what it means for health care in Murfreesboro and Rutherford County.

Q: You've got the big opening a week away. Are there any details left undone or are you all ready to go?

Ferguson: We are as prepared as we know how to be. We've had weekly meetings for the past few months and have been tracking issue lists, whether

About Gordon Ferguson

- Who:** President and CEO, Middle Tennessee Medical Center
- Education:** Bachelor's degree in business administration with honors from University of Tennessee-Knoxville; master's degree in hospital and health administration from University of Alabama-Birmingham
- Career:** 20 years in health care, starting as director of planning at Baptist Medical Center Princeton in Birmingham; 1998, joined MTMC as senior vice president of support services and served as senior vice president of operations; 2004, named chief operating officer; 2006, president and CEO
- Family:** Wife, Cindy, speech language pathologist with Murfreesboro City Schools; two sons, Robbie and Andy
- Church:** First Methodist

it's just related to operations or information systems or health information, and we started where we had several red items (high priority), several yel-

low items and some green items and we slowly migrated over to where we

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may have one or two yellow items that are in the process of being resolved. But our team has worked extremely hard to make sure every detail is covered and have done a number of practice runs with what it's going to be like for a staff to be working in their new environment.

Q: You all have a faith-based mission. What will the new hospital do in terms of building on that mission?

Ferguson: One of the very basic things is the fact that our chapel is really the centerpiece of the hospital. That's a place our staff, patients and visitors can go and just have some quiet time and it's located right beside our healing garden, so we've put a lot of thought into creating this healing environment where you feel that sense of Christ's presence throughout the facility.

Q: How many days will it take you to make the transition?

Ferguson: Beginning Monday we'll have several departments that will start moving into the new facility, and that will happen over the week. But in terms of the patient transition, that's really all going to be focused on Saturday, Oct. 2. We're assuming right now we may move from 400 N. Highland to the new facility.

Q: How many more employees and doctors are you all hiring for the new hospital?

Ferguson: In terms of associates, about 200, and we have just about reached that goal. In terms of physicians, we just had about 20 new physicians who were credentialed by our board in September, and we've got discussions going on with several prospective physicians that are interested in relocating to this area.

Q: What do you feel this move for MTMC from North Highland to Medical Center Parkway means for Murfreesboro?

Ferguson: I think it's really going to fall into the categories of access and then technology. We still have people who have a hard time finding the hospital at its current location, and once they get there, it's very confusing to find your way throughout the facility. ... This new hospital obviously is very accessible, being on Medical Center Parkway, and a lot of thought has gone into "how do we make it easy for our visitors and our patients to navigate through the facility." We've been able to incor-



The new MTMC features a healing garden, where guests can find solitude and inspiration in a quiet, serene setting.

AARON THOMPSON/MTMC

porate the Disney approach where you've go on-stage and off-stage and it's very clear where our patients need to travel within the building. ...

The other thing is the technology. We have invested over \$30 million in new equipment. Whether it's in the pharmacy or diagnostic imaging or our new invasive services department, it's state-of-the-art technology, it's all digital and integrated into a number of different clinical systems.

Q: What will the room designs, IT improvements and medical technology do in terms of patient care?

Ferguson: It will change dramatically the way our staff approaches their responsibilities. All of our nursing staff and some of our ancillary staff will have wireless telephones and will be able to communicate with one another, and that's tied into our nurse call system, so that alone will help with the efficiency of our staff. And then our goal is to continue to move toward a complete automated medical record and that will give our physicians access to the patients' medical information, whether they're here in the hospital, in their office or at home.

Q: Rutherford County and the County Commission are accustomed to spending about \$45 million to \$50 million for high schools. But this is a \$267 million project. Do you find that staggering?

Ferguson: Yes, we do, and in raw numbers it's about a million dollars a bed to build a new hospital (The hospital is licensed for 286 beds). I think because of the approach we used with our architectural team and our construction management group we engaged all of our subcontractors early in the process to where we didn't have any surprises in terms of the cost of the project, and I'm pleased to say that right up until the very end we've been able to keep the project on schedule and within budget. But it is a huge investment that's been made in this community.

Health Services and Ascension Health.)

Ferguson: We had to go through a very stringent, due-diligence process. Ascension wanted to make sure we had looked at all of our options and that we were not over-designing the facility and were making the best use of those capital dollars. But in the end we were able to convince them about the growth that was taking place in Murfreesboro as well as the need for a new hospital, and this isn't just a replacement facility. It really is going to enable us to provide new services and have capacity that will allow us to reach out to a larger segment of the patient population.

Q: Do you think the hospital would have made the move if the city of Murfreesboro hadn't bought the land and had it available.

Ferguson: I think we would have still made the move, simply because for the long-term future of the hospital we were not going to be able to take care of our patients at the existing location. I think it just worked out ideally that this large tract of land was available when it was, and the fact of working with the city and the state to get the infrastructure in place and the new interchange built, which then created the whole Gateway District, has just been a winning situation for our community.

Q: Through that the hospital became really the driving force for the Gateway District and, of course, the road's named Medical Center Parkway. How important is that for you all to be the focal point of this area?

Ferguson: I think for a couple of reasons, one again is the accessibility. While we are not visible from the interstate, having Medical Center Parkway identified as an exit helps people know, hopefully, that there's a hospital very close by and we're exactly two miles from the interchange. But I think the other side of the coin is with the investment being made by the hospital, it certainly has spurred a lot of the

very fortunate that timing seemed to work out right for the hospital to be built at this time.

Q: I've heard the term regional medical facilities tossed around. What does that mean for you all?

Ferguson: It means we've got the coverage of specialties available through our Emergency Department and that we've got the programs that don't just serve the immediate city of Murfreesboro, Rutherford County, but that we will be able to attract patients from some of the surrounding counties to the point that they don't feel the need to drive to Nashville for conditions that could be just as well treated here.

Q: What will the new MTMC mean for Rutherford County's quality of life compared to the old hospital?

Ferguson: I think there are certainly some core services that we have been able to provide at the existing hospital, the obstetrics program, but I think this is just stepping up another level in terms of the services we will be able to provide. Again, the new equipment, the comfort of the patient rooms, and I know it's going to be a facility our whole community can take some pride in, that this is their hospital and just the opportunity to be here when the hospital opens in October is just a unique opportunity.

Q: Is there anything you want to add?

Ferguson: The one thing I always like to underscore is, as nice as the new building and facilities are, it's really our associates and physicians that make what we do successful, and we have been offering all of our associates a two-hour course called "Who we are and how we serve," and it basically focuses on taking our core values and tying that in to what we are expecting of our associates in the way that they interact with our patients, our visitors and each other. We're very fortunate to have some loyal staff and we just feel our success is going to be based on improving the