



Construction workers, from left, David Vandivort, Dennis Meeks, Darrell Binkley and Tim Herrington hook-up the autographed Turner Universal beam Monday during the new Middle Tennessee Medical Center's Topping Out ceremony. The beam was hoisted to the highest point of the new MTMC structure, 128 feet above the foundation. DNJ PHOTO BY ELISA WHITE

# MTMC tops out at 128 feet

## Highest beam erected onto the new structure

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More than 400 community members and construction workers gathered in front of the new Middle Tennessee Medical Center (MTMC) Monday morning to celebrate a momentous occasion — the building's topping out ceremony.

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The new hospital is being built along Medical Center Parkway in Murfreesboro's Gateway area and will eventually replace the existing facility located at

### The 'Topping Out' tradition

No one seems to know exactly when or how it started, but the tradition of 'Topping Out' has become a cherished custom of ironworkers whenever the skeleton of a bridge or building is completed.

For some, the evergreen symbolizes that the job went up without a loss of life, while for

others it's a good luck charm for the future occupants. For some, the flag signals a structure built with federal funds, but for others it suggests patriotism or the American dream.

Source: Melnick, S.L. (2000, December). *Modern Steel Construction*.

400 N. Highland Ave. Construction began this past spring.

A white, steel beam was signed by attendees Monday,

and per long-standing tradition, an evergreen tree was affixed to it. The beam, flanked on either See MTMC, page B3

# MTMC

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side by American and MTMC flags, was then hoisted 128 feet into the air and placed at the highest structural point of the new hospital.

"It's a celebration more for the workers and the success they've had in getting this far," said senior project manager Andy Davis of Turner Universal of Brentwood, the contractor for the project.

"It takes an entire team to get to this point," he said.

President and CEO for MTMC, Gordon B. Ferguson, agreed that the creation of the new hospital is a group effort of the construction workers, architect and city officials.

"Today is really about recognizing the work of all of our associates," Ferguson said.

He also noted that the beam had been in the courtyard at the current MTMC hospital for several days, so that all the employees had a chance to sign it.

"We're not just here for the bricks and mortar, but for serving our patients," noted Ferguson.

During his speech, Matt Miller, project manager with Turner Universal, not only acknowledged everyone's efforts, but also said Monday marked a significant milestone of 140,000 man hours, a total of 200 on-site workers and 30 days without a single safety incident.

The event allowed mem-

bers of the public to get a close-up view of the massive structure that has come quite a way since its groundbreaking six months ago, on April 16.

"It's a beautiful new addition to the community that will provide care and understanding for many of our residents and those of the surrounding area," said Murfreesboro Mayor Tommy Bragg, who was also in attendance.

The \$267 million project is expected to be completed by August of 2010, and ready for patients three months later.

Davis said the work crews will begin sheathing soon, in order to start the masonry process. The next big milestone will be in about 12 months, when the entire exterior will be completely water-

proofed and 100 percent protected from the elements.

The 555,100 square-foot edifice will resemble the brick and stone exterior of the existing physicians' office building, which was recently completed and sits alongside the hospital construction site — but will dwarf it in size.

Upon completion, the building will provide 286 patient beds, 10 operating rooms and an extensive radiology department.

The tree atop the beam will soon don lights for the holiday season.

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Editor's note: The DNJ will continue to follow the construction progress of this major project as part of a special series: Building MTMC.