

# PROFILE

## Coborn Cancer Center in St. Cloud, Minn.

Creative Fundraising to Ensure Excellence in Cancer Care

**F**ormerly the CentraCare Cancer Center in St. Cloud, Coborn Cancer Center's new name reflects a family's generosity to its community.

Last January, the Coborn family donated \$1.5 million to the center to enhance cancer services in Central Minnesota. These monies were used to purchase needed new technologies, and the center's administration showed its gratitude by renaming the facility to honor the Coborn family.

In January 2002, all outpatient cancer services from CentraCare Clinic - River Campus and St. Cloud Hospital in St. Cloud, Minn., relocated to the new Coborn Cancer Center outpatient cancer facility in the CentraCare Health Plaza. The Plaza, a 350,000-square-foot medical facility on a 126-acre campus, houses comprehensive outpatient specialty care services. The grounds include a beautiful waterfront, native woodlands, and restored prairie land.

### State-of-the-Art Technology

The Coborn Cancer Center's Radiation Oncology department houses two linear accelerators and a new CT simulator that was purchased with the Coborn family's gift. The simulator has allowed the center to offer IMRT, and IMRT protocols are being developed and should be implemented before the end of 2002. Radiation oncology is also offered at a satellite clinic in Alexandria, Minn., 70 miles away.

Such an enormous financial investment in today's climate of rising health care costs and ever-shrinking reimbursement required an innovative fundraising campaign. CentraCare Health Foundation spearheaded the effort. A slogan



### Selected Patient Support Services

- *Look Good, Feel Better* helps people with cancer cope with the side effects of cancer treatment such as dry skin and hair loss.
- *Us, Too* is open to men who have experienced prostate cancer and their spouses.
- *Mutual Help Support Group* provides a forum where people can learn about new cancer treatments, different resources in the community, and information about cancer research.
- *A Patient/Family Advisory Panel* is a 14-member community council whose role is to ensure that the unique personal experiences of the cancer patient are an integral part of quality cancer care delivery and improvement efforts.

was chosen (*Investing in Health...Ensuring Excellence*), and a five-year capital campaign to encourage financial support from employees, physicians, board members, auxiliary staff, and the community was begun. Donors are able to make gifts in five-year pledges and employees have the options to make donations through payroll deductions.

The Foundation designated cancer as a priority fundraising area, and the cancer program decided that

### Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 489
- Dedicated cancer unit beds: 24
- Number of new analytic cancer cases seen per year: 1,200
- Managed care penetration in Minnesota: 25 percent

updating technology, expanding its research efforts, breast cancer, and the children's cancer center should be the principal areas on which philanthropy should focus. Clinicians, physicians, the cancer program patient advisory group, and cam-

## PROFILE

paign volunteers undertook extensive public speaking engagements about the needs of the cancer program in both hospital and clinic departments and the community at large. Articles were written for local newspapers, and announcements were made on local radio stations. The staff has kept abreast of fundraising activities through in-house newsletters and internal e-mail.

To date, \$8.5 million has been raised towards the fundraising campaign's \$10 million goal.

### The Challenges of Merging Cancer Services

A cancer program has existed in St. Cloud since the mid-1970s and has had continuous accreditation by the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer since 1989. The new 26,000-square-foot Coborn Cancer Center brings together medical oncology and radiation oncology services, transfusion medicine, phlebotomy, the Breast Center, the cancer data registry, the cancer clinical research program, and a full radiology department.

The cancer center also offers genetic counseling, home care and hospice programs, nutrition counseling, and medical oncology outreach to seven communities in central Minnesota.

"Prior to moving to the Coborn Cancer Center earlier this year, cancer services were provided in four different areas of our hospital and clinic settings. We brought them all together into a one-stop service area, which is our cancer program. The capability of having so many essential cancer services in one location is critical for persons with cancer. Patients can now be dropped off only steps from their treatment destination," said Johanna Zwilling, R.N., M.B.A., director of the Coborn Cancer Center. "We are proud to provide essential services under one roof in an environment designed to enhance hope and healing."

Several major challenges had to be overcome when the clinic and the hospital merged into one institution.

Each site had its own work culture. The employees gradually learned how to work together to meet the needs of patients, and in doing so created a new work culture for the new center.

Uniform salary and hiring structures had to be developed to deal



equitably with differences in salaries, benefits, policies, and procedures.

Patient satisfaction surveys from both facilities were combined and standardized, and a regular survey schedule was established. Patient satisfaction data from the various settings were transferred to the new location so past benchmarks could be used for comparisons. "Our patient satisfaction results for the entire health care system are extraordinarily high," said Zwilling.

The two financial accounting systems had to be merged together, and this comprehensive task is still in progress.

Finally, while hospital employees were used to meeting numerous federal and state regulatory requirements, prior to the move the clinic staff had fewer external compliance

standards. All staff members received revised training in compliance standards, policies, procedures, and validation checklists.

### The Pediatric Oncology Program

The pediatric oncology program, which was launched in March 2002, is a joint effort of St. Cloud Hospital, CentraCare Clinic, and Children's Hospitals and Clinics in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn.

"We can now deliver chemotherapy to children in the pediatric cancer unit instead of having children and families drive to the metropolitan area of Minneapolis/St. Paul three to four times a week," said Zwilling.

The pediatric cancer unit is coled by physicians from CentraCare and Children's Hospitals and Clinics, the largest pediatric health organization in the Upper Midwest.

"The pediatric oncology program has been very well received by both patients and families," said Zwilling. Just recently, donations from businesses in the community will allow the pediatric oncology program to purchase computers for its treatment rooms so children at the Cancer Center can link up and chat with other children receiving chemotherapy around the country.

### A Thriving Research Program

Patients at the Coborn Cancer Center can take part in a variety of research programs. The cancer center has participated in the STAR trial for breast cancer prevention and the American Cancer Society's Lifelink study. The cancer program also participates in the North Central Cancer Treatment Group (NCCTG), the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG), and selected programs from the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project (NSABP), the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG), and the Cancer and Acute Leukemia Group B (CALGB).

The Coborn Cancer Center meets its challenges with energy and innovation. Staff dedication and creativity guided the difficult process of combining two distinct medical facilities into a single entity, and the result is a harmoniously run center in a beautiful setting with state-of-the-art technology and care. ■