

## Positive changes underway at Healdsburg Hospital

For those of you who have been following the plight of small hospitals in Sonoma County, the following information should instill optimism in residents of Northern Sonoma County. Healthcare Foundation Northern Sonoma County has announced a \$14.5 million capital campaign to support Healdsburg District Hospital and that \$7.75 million has already been pledged through advance gifts.

Funds raised will allow the hospital to expand and diversify the services it offers, according to campaign co-chair Kay Reed, a former vice president of Chase Manhattan Bank and a 20 year Healdsburg resident. The Wetzel family, owners of Alexander Valley Vineyards, partially funded a new emergency department with their \$2 million gift. Dr. David Anderson, who has been on the staff at the hospital for 34 years commented, "Thirty four years ago, when I joined this hospital, the existing emergency room was inadequate and it's taken 34 years to change that. We are very excited." The new emergency department will open later this summer and will handle twice the patient load that it can today.

Evan Rayner, Healdsburg District Hospital CEO also announced that the hospital is "in the black," in part because of parcel taxes approved by the voters in two elections and the implementation of a sound turnaround business plan.

The hospital was also selected as California's first Critical Access Hospital, to acquire a Remote Presence Robot, which will enable Healdsburg's patients and doctors to consult with specialists anywhere in the world. The term Critical Access is a Medicare designation for rural limited service hospitals, most of which are located in medically underserved areas.

Acquiring this robotic technology will allow the hospital to reopen its Intensive Care Unit, which has been closed since 2001. It is about five and a half feet tall and is operated remotely by a control stick, is equipped with a special video camera, microphone and LCD screen. The specialist can see and hear the patient, review patient records and examine X-rays. The robot is managed by Dr. James Gude in Santa Rosa and a team of Critical Care Specialists called "Offsite Care." Dr. James Finn, also a partner in Offsite Care, will become the medical director for Healdsburg District Hospital's ICU. He is a critical care specialist, internist and anesthesiologist.

The robotic technology allows real time consultation and can visually monitor, hear and also read ultrasounds. "The only things it can't do are taste and smell," according to Dr. Gude. He added,

"Healdsburg District Hospital staff can consult with experts anywhere when we need them." The cost of the unit is \$170,000 and can be upgraded via fiber optics so that it can conduct patient scopes. At 1/8

the cost of a Bay Area staff physician, the technology helps Healdsburg District Hospital offer improved patient care and services to residents of northern Sonoma County.



Healdsburg District Hospital patient Lindsay Smith is being examined by Dr. James Gude via robotic technology designed by InTouch Technologies. Dr. James Gude in Santa Rosa is the face on the screen. Dr. James Finn, medical director for the ICU, and Chris Hanzel, interim Chief Nursing Officer are assisting in the examination.