



◆ COMMENTARY:

From the Editorial Desk. . .

Healdsburg District Hospital is a north county asset

Last week Healdsburg District Hospital dedicated its newly built emergency department and its intensive care unit which has been closed for the past seven years. The hospital also announced that a stroke center will be open later this year.

These efforts would not have been possible without the passage in 2004 of a parcel tax approved by two thirds of voters in Cloverdale, Geyserville, Healdsburg and Windsor. At the time that the North Sonoma County Hospital District had asked voters to pass the additional parcel tax in the Spring of that year, the hospital's future looked bleak indeed. Dealing with reduced reimbursements, the bankruptcy of Health Plan of the Redwoods and escalating costs, it was said at the time that if Measure G did not pass, the doors to Healdsburg District Hospital would close. With over 70 percent of voters approving the measure, the short term fate of the hospital was sealed. It would remain open.

The District's Board of Directors also put together a comprehensive Turnaround Plan which addressed management and economic goals for the hospital. In concert with that effort the hospital foundation, Healthcare Foundation Northern Sonoma County launched a \$14.5 million capital campaign to raise money for the community hospital. In response to that campaign, several local families gave large monetary gifts of \$1 million dollars or more to the district: Harry and Maggie Wetzel, Edward and Betty Kozel, Sr., Herb and Jane Dwight, Henry and Holly Wendt and Raymond and Patricia Chambers. The community of Cloverdale owes them a large debt of gratitude.

Without the expanded services that these major donors have made possible, Cloverdale patients would be diverted to other facilities in Santa Rosa and other points south. Healdsburg District Hospital is now able to offer major improvements in medical technology, from diagnosis to treatment, rarely available from a small community hospital. NLH