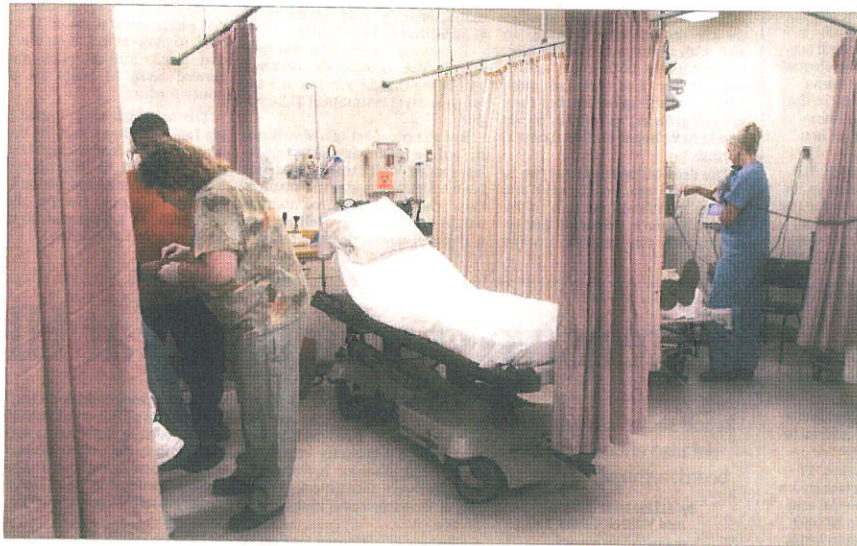


The Press

DEMOCRAT

Business



KENT PORTER / The Press Democrat

Nurse practitioner Sherri Pether, second left, interviews a patient as outpatient nurse Cher Ares, right, attends to another Friday in Healdsburg Hospital's emergency room. The 900-square-foot facility is being replaced by a 4,600-square-foot building.

New ER in works for Healdsburg Hospital

Generosity of local couple helps make longtime dream of expanding small facility a reality

By CAROL BENFELL
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

In six months, doctors will no longer be forced to shuffle patients in Healdsburg Hospital's tiny emergency room or put them temporarily out in the hall because all the beds are full.

Thanks to a benefactor, the hospital has broken ground on a new \$3 million emergency room to replace the aging 900-square-foot facility built in 1972.

"This is cause for celebration," said Walt Maack, medical director of Healdsburg's emergency room for the past 28 years. "The place is going to be five times the size of the current emergency room, and it will be easier to take care of patients. We won't have to constantly shuffle peo-



Ed Villarreal of Sonoma Engineering cuts asphalt Friday in preparation for a new \$3 million emergency room being erected at the hospital.

ple or have people lying in the hall."

It wouldn't have happened, Maack said, without a \$2 million donation from Maggie and Harry Wetzel, a Healdsburg couple who have lived in the area since 1962.

Hospital doctors and administrators have talked for 20 years about upgrading the emergency room, but until now, the money was never

there, Maack said.

"If it weren't for these generous donors, we'd still be waiting for the money. After all these false starts, it's really happening," Maack said.

The emergency room at Healdsburg Hospital is considered key to patient care in northern Sonoma

TURN TO HEALDSBURG, PAGE E5