

CEDAR RAPIDS

Hall-Perrine Cancer Center construction continues

By Pat Shaver

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The Hall-Perrine Cancer Center being constructed near Mercy Medical Center in Cedar Rapids was designed with patients and their families in mind.

The building, which is in the middle of construction, will feature an expanded waiting room, concierge station, a resource library for patients, a coffee shop, an exercise room, a healing garden, a two-story atrium and a community room, said Bradd Brown, principal of OPN Architects.

"The first floor will be very active," he said last week while giving a tour of the construction site to media and hospital officials.

The facility is about nine months from completion. The cancer center will have patient and family centered chemotherapy infusion rooms, integrated therapies, an image recovery center and easy access to surface parking.

Plans for the building came from several different areas, said Tim Charles, president and CEO of Mercy Medical Center in Cedar Rapids. The most important feedback the hospital received was from current and past patients. He said hearing both negative experiences and positive ones from patients who have been treated through Mercy and people who went somewhere else assisted in the planning.

For example, based on patient input, the third floor will include infusion sta-



JOHN RICHARD

Mercy Medical Center's Hall-Perrine Cancer Center in Cedar Rapids is about nine months away from completion. Officials with the hospital and engineering and design firms toured the construction site last week. The \$24.6 million project includes a three level, 85,000 square foot facility.

tions that use natural lighting features and offer views outside. Offering green space for patients to use outside the cancer center also came from patient input. The space planned surrounding the facility will be one of the largest green spaces in downtown Cedar Rapids.

"All of this is coming together in a very nice and dramatic way," Mr. Charles said. "This is for any individual in our community that is dealing with this horrific disease."

The building was designed to be easy

for patients and their families to navigate and also has several unique features like the healing garden and an atrium.

"We're confident we've got something that's going to work very good," said Dan Rectanwald, principal with HGA, an architecture, planning and engineering firm, which is working on the project.

Mr. Rectanwald added that the facility is full of different services and features, which patients will have easy access to in one place.

"We're pressed about as tight as we can get," he said.

Officials held a groundbreaking ceremony for the project in April. Construction has progressed quickly since then, with the building scheduled for completion in the spring of 2012.

The center will include physicians from Oncology Associates and Radiation Oncology of Cedar Rapids. The center will also have new multi-disciplinary clinics that include medical and radiation oncologists, specialized surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, pulmonologists, gastroenterologists, oncology nurses, nurse navigators, dieticians and social workers.

Construction of the building includes about 22 miles of data cables, 1 million pounds of structural steel, 59 miles of copper wire and 106,000 pounds of sheet metal ductwork.

Construction costs are estimated to total about \$24.6 million and are being funded by Mercy. The three-level, 85,000 square foot facility will have a primarily glass exterior.

The second floor of the building will allow for future expansion. The third floor will house chemotherapy infusion rooms, a retail pharmacy and lab and research space.

Every year, about 16,000 Iowans are diagnosed with cancer. In Linn County, one person dies everyday from cancer, according to a Mercy news release.

The center will help in lowering overall health care costs by coordination, centralization and elimination of duplication. CBJ

IOWA

Independent telecoms join to fight FCC proposal

By Gigi Wood

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Many may not realize it, but when cell phone users make calls along rural stretches of Interstate 80, they are often using small town, independently owned telephone companies' networks. Those companies face potential setbacks if proposed federal changes take place, putting those networks at risk, owners have said.

"Wireless communication needs a reliable wire-based network to support it," said Joe Hrdlicka, director of government relations at the Iowa Telecommunications Association. "One thing we've found we need to educate the public about is, wireless needs wires. People aren't aware of that. Wireless communication doesn't just travel from tower to tower to tower. It has to travel from a tower to a wireline network to get where it needs to go."

If customers want wireless access on the go, federal investments are needed to

maintain, improve and extend telecommunications infrastructure, he said.

Mr. Hrdlicka and leaders from independently owned, Iowa-based communications companies have banded together to form the Great Disconnect campaign, funded by the Iowa Telecommunications Co. Coalition, which includes Iowa Network Services, Iowa Telecommunications Association and Rural Iowa Independent Telephone Association. A handful of their representatives traveled the state last week to spread their message against a Federal Communications Commission proposal they say will force price increases and lead to fewer investments in communication infrastructure.

About 40,000 customers in the Corridor are serviced by rural telecommunications companies, he said.

Congress in 2009 mandated the FCC to develop a plan that would guarantee broadband access to all Americans.

The FCC was directed to create a plan that provided that coverage, which en-

sures rural subscribers advanced services at rates that are reasonably comparable to those offered in urban areas.

The end goal is to provide a level playing field for all residents when it comes to workforce development and educational opportunities. For example, as Iowa Workforce Development offices close across Iowa due to budget cuts, more rural residents will need to travel to the remaining regional offices for work assistance, or have Internet access to use IWD's online resources. Many now travel to public libraries to log on to those services through library computers.

This is no new issue. States and the federal government have long grappled with how to provide rural areas, as well low income individuals, access to basic resources such as basic telephone, cable and Internet services. Now the FCC is working on a plan to try to ensure everyone receives access, at an affordable price.

Long-term goals for the FCC's National Broadband Plan include:

At least 100 million homes have affordable access to download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and upload speeds of 50 megabits per second.

The United States should lead the world in mobile innovation, with the most extensive wireless network of any nation.

Every American should have affordable access to robust broadband service and every community should have at least 1 gigabit-per-second broadband service to anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals and government buildings.

A nationwide, wireless broadband public safety network for first responders.

Americans should be able to use broadband to track and manage real-time energy consumption.

The Congressional mandate required that the plan include a detailed strategy for achieving affordability and using of broadband to advance "consumer welfare, civic participation, public safety and homeland

SBA

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Dennis Larkin, branch manager for the Cedar Rapids office, attributed the success of the Cedar Rapids SBA office and its partners to the well-trained and seasoned staff.

"The staff here in Cedar Rapids is still up to any challenge," Mr. Larkin said.

The office is responsible for 29 counties in Iowa. Through the end of May, 2011, the Cedar Rapids branch issued 7,996 loans. Those loans represent \$1.38 billion in gross loan dollars.

The Cedar Rapids SBA loans have helped 6,721 different firms and have supported 75,613 jobs.

One of the first loans administered by the office in 1980 was to a young couple hoping to open a pharmacy in Cedar Rapids.

Craig Clark, owner of Clark's Pharmacy in Cedar Rapids, and his wife, Pam, had an opportunity to buy the business, but only had a few months to close the deal.

"Because of our age — I was 25 — and our lack of assets, we had to work with the SBA," Mr. Clark said. "This office gave a young pharmacist and his wife a chance."

The pharmacy started with two employees and now has 14 people on staff.

"It created jobs, but even better, it created long-term jobs," Mr. Clark said.

Joe Slavens, president and CEO of Northwest Bank and Trust in Davenport, has backed several SBA loans since the Cedar Rapids office opened.

"We have done hundreds of SBA loans over my entire career," Mr. Slavens said.

For example, he said, SBA loans have helped bring Subway restaurants to the Quad Cities. SBA loans also helped bring a pet cemetery business and a geothermal heating company to the Quad Cities.

Pat Brown-Dixon, regional administrator of the SBA administration's region VII office, noted the three main focuses of the SBA, the three Cs: counseling, capital and contracting. The SBA counsels businesses by partnering with groups like SCORE, the Small Business Development Center and the Women Business Centers. It offers access to capital through bankers and lenders and assists with contracting opportunities, Ms. Brown-Dixon said.

The SBA also offers disaster assistance, which has been an important role for the Cedar Rapids office in responding to the 2008 floods, said Joe Folsom, SBA district director.

"It's a significant part of what we do as an agency. We're a key part of the fabric of this community," he said.

The SBA was founded in 1953 and offers programs that include financial and federal contract procurement assistance, management assistance and specialized outreach to women, minorities and armed forces veterans. **CBJ**

TELEPHONE

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security, community development, health-care delivery, energy independence and efficiency, education, employee training, private sector investment, entrepreneurial activity, job creation, economic growth and other national purposes."

To meet these goals, the FCC has said it will need to make 500 megahertz of broadband spectrum available; only 50 megahertz are currently in inventory. The plan states that the FCC wants to make sure service providers can access infrastructure, such as poles, conduits, rooftops and rights-of-way to facilitate upgrades and competitive entry.

The FCC's plan calls for the creation of the Connect America Fund to help pay for a broadband and voice network of at least 4 megabits per second download speeds. The fund would shift up to \$15.5 billion during the next decade from the existing Universal Service Fund (USF) program to the new Connect America Fund, a move the Iowa Telecommunications Co. Coalition questions. Money for the USF comes from a surcharge at the end of every customer's telephone and cell phone bill.

The plan also recommends reform of intercarrier compensation, the charge that one carrier pays to another to originate, transport and/or terminate telecommunications traffic.

Iowa rural telecommunications compa-

nies rely on federal funding to help pay for new infrastructure and expanding broadband networks throughout the state. In 2010, the USF brought \$155 million into Iowa.

"I hear from a lot of people, 'I don't live in a small town. I don't live in West Liberty, I don't live in West Branch. I have a wireless phone,'" Mr. Hrdlicka said. "It's hard to get them engaged (about the issue). But take \$155 million out of Iowa that was going for telecommunications build-outs, broadband appointments, and it's going to have a real chilling effect."

The FCC has yet to outline how funding to the USF would change or how intercarrier compensation would be reformed.

Rural telecommunications companies have three sources of revenue: USF money, access charges and local rates. The coalition is concerned that the FCC plan will eliminate the USF program and access charges. In anticipation, most Iowan rural companies have cut infrastructure projects.

"I'm very concerned because until the FCC says, 'Here's our final rules,' I think this doesn't look good for the state of Iowa," said Jerry Melick, Liberty Communications' general manager. "I think we're looking at a significant revenue impact at our company. What's at stake is over half of our revenues."

While Liberty Communications and other rural carriers have worked to be less dependent on federal funding and to diversify revenues, it will be difficult to expand service and keep low rates without that money, he said. **CBJ**

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