

## **PALM DRIVE TO OPEN NEW PHYSICAL THERAPY FACILITY: CENTER WILL OFFER CLASSES, GYM, OCCUPATIONAL, SPEECH SERVICES**

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**Palm Drive** Hospital will soon move its physical therapy service, a bright spot for the financially embattled hospital, to a former Sebastopol bowling alley.

"It is a big deal, especially for a community hospital," said Ina Fitzgibbon, director of rehabilitation services. "It is so difficult to invest in something, but what happened is the last two years, the rehabilitation group has shown consistent progress and made a profit."

The new facility will provide physical, occupational and speech therapy, which are services now provided at a smaller building near the hospital, Fitzgibbon said. There also will be a gym for new programs for the general public, with a focus on such issues as childhood obesity and balance for the elderly, as well as continuing exercise programs for people rehabilitating from injury.

"Therapy is growing in general," Fitzgibbon said, noting that baby boomers are reaching Medicare age and have begun retiring.

The need for therapy is fueled by an increase in injuries in a society that has become more sedentary because of the reliance on technology and computers, and by increases in obesity and diabetes, she said. Fitzgibbon said the hospital may charge \$50 a month for public use of the center, on par with regular gyms, but provide additional expertise because of the hospital affiliation. For the elderly dealing with balance problems, there could be specific exercises and a consultation with a pharmacist, she said. Obesity causes skeletal and muscular problems that could be addressed with exercise, as well as consultations with dieticians.

The hospital's physical therapy department serves about 800 patients a month, but could easily grow to 1,000, Fitzgibbon said. This past fiscal year, the department had a \$1 million budget and made a profit of \$300,000 to \$400,000, with larger profits predicted for the next three years, Fitzgibbon said.

**Palm Drive**, the smallest hospital in Sonoma County, emerged from bankruptcy in May. It had a loss of \$3.6 million in 2008-2009, a loss of \$1.1 million in 2009-2010 and is predicting a small profit this fiscal year.

The new physical therapy facility will be 5,300 square feet in what once was Double Decker-L&L Lanes. The structure is now part of the Gravenstein Square shopping center. The bowling alley, which closed two decades ago, was known for its controversial neon "Gravenstein green" exterior color. It was expanded, repainted and renovated in 1998 by

Ron Basso as headquarters for the RS Basso furniture store chain.

The hospital will spend \$7,000 a month in rent payments. It will make \$125,000 in improvements and install new equipment worth \$75,000. The building that was the physical therapy facility, which is 3,186 square feet, may become a physicians' medical building, Fitzgibbon said.

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