

## **New Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center set to open spring 2016**

FORT HOOD, Texas - The opening of the new Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at the beginning of April 2016 will not only signal the transformation of the Fort Hood skyline, but the continued transformation of CRDAMC into the Army's Premier Readiness Platform.

"Our mission is to provide quality, safe, patient-centered care every day," said Col. Mark Thompson, hospital commander. "We do great work at the current facility, but the new one gives us a great opportunity to work in an updated environment that only stands to benefit the Fort Hood Soldiers, Family Members and Retirees we serve.

"It's a win-win for the community. It will allow us to practice twenty-first century medicine in a twenty-first century facility. Our medical personnel get to deliver care in a technology rich environment, while patients get to receive care in an environment that promotes healing and well-being," Thompson added.

At almost one million sq. ft., the new hospital will have three parking garages offering more than 5,000 spaces for patients, visitors, and staff. The clinic towers surround the main hospital, making the medical campus far more accessible. As a certified LEED facility the 98-bed, 6-story hospital sets the stage for new levels of care for beneficiaries.

The new facility, constructed from an evidenced- based care model, has a variety of features designed to promote healing and well-being. When visiting the medical campus, patients and providers can enjoy a few moments of relaxation at the courtyard on the entry level featuring waterways and a wall highlighting the accomplishments of Brig. Gen Carl R. Darnall.

The expansive windows provide an abundance of natural light which is also correlated with patient comfort and healing.

Thompson, a pediatrician specializing in neonatology said he is excited about the new labor and delivery units and what patients will experience in the new hospital.

"One of the great things the community can look forward to is that every patient room in the new hospital is private. Gone are the days of the semi-private room," he said. "New families can bond

with their infant in comfortable, bright rooms with a designated space for family members to sit and be comfortable.”

Construction is about 98 percent complete on the new facility but there is still a lot of staff work that has to happen before it is fully operational and able to see patients, according to Thompson. Over the next several months, CRDAMC staff will undergo hours of training and certifications in preparation of opening.

Most people probably don't think about it, but moving into a new hospital is a huge project. It's a little more daunting than moving into a new house. In a new house, you have time to learn which light switches operate which lights. But in a hospital, life and death decisions are made within the confines of the building 24/7, there isn't always time to look for outlets or try to remember where supplies are located.

“Patient safety is our number priority and the staff must be ready to perform quality, safe patient care from day one. Our teams have to have a high level of familiarity with the building prior to ever seeing a patient.”

To ensure that the learning curve of operating in a new facility is reduced to “zero,” the staff will begin training in the new space, with new equipment, and rehearse patient care delivery so much that it will become a tried and trusted habit. Thompson and team have an extensive plan in the next few months following the completion of construction which includes orientation, new equipment training and certification and rehearsals.

As part of their preparation throughout the year, CRDAMC staff has conducted several table top exercises where teams come together and talk through what they would do in certain scenarios.

“It's clear that the staff is well trained and demonstrates the highest level of professionalism in the daily delivery of care for the community. The medical teams all understand what they need to do; they simply need to understand how to do it in a room they aren't used to,” Thompson said. “We have to rehearse how to do everything in a new facility. The building is about 60 percent larger than the current facility and so it's important that the staff knows just where everything is that they need and the quickest routes to places in the huge facility.”

The next phase for preparation before opening will be “Day in the Life” events, according to Thompson. “Day in the Life” events give the staff opportunity to practice the delivery of care through scenarios played with community members.

Two full-scale rehearsals of ‘Day in the Life’ events are planned in February and March of 2016.

“Community members are needed to help us run successful ‘Day in the Life’ events,” said Thompson. “We will need maximum participation from the community. We need the full spectrum of patient types--from children to family members to retirees.”

Thompson estimates they will need about 200 community volunteers to be able to execute the “Day in the Life” events and encourages community members to come out to his upcoming Town Halls and sign up. (The first New Hospital Town Hall is scheduled for Oct. 19 at Howze Theater.)

“I want the community to be excited about the new hospital. It’s a beautiful facility and is going to make a big difference in how our patients feel about coming to CRDAMC,” said Thompson. “But most of all I am excited about the fact that we get to deliver the care we want to deliver, in a way our patients deserve to have it delivered in.”