Cottage Hospital keeps evolving

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HAVERHILL — For more than 110 years, Cottage Hospital has served residents in the region. Last week, Community Relations Director Maryanne Aldrich provided updates about how the facility looks for more ways to serve the community.

With a recent land purchase across the road, Cottage Hospital will build a new medical professional office building. As Aldrich said, the new building means, "We'll have some additional space for our providers."

Ground for the new building should be broken soon, Aldrich added.

Ammonoosuc Community Health Services recently bought the existing office building near where the new structure will be built. Aldrich said the property sale assists both Cottage and ACHS serve regional needs.

The hospital’s new office building will be named in honor of Dr. Harry M. Rowe. He died in August 2012, just shy of his 100th birthday. A stalwart provider of health services for six decades, Rowe was a revered member of the community.

Aldrich said Cottage Hospital continues to focus on ways to provide information that can keep the community healthy, as well as address growing medical needs. Based on a community needs assessment, Aldrich said mental health, diabetes, and obesity are important areas for health providers to focus on.

Mental health services are especially crucial, Aldrich said. She noted state studies that have found a large unmet need for people suffering from mental health issues. She called mental health problems a "crisis and epidemic" throughout the state.

Healthy cooking classes and a new diabetes education program are other ways Cottage hopes to keep the community healthy.

Aldrich said the approach to community engagement means Cottage Hospital works to identify needs, then address them proactively as a way to help people.

One way to draw the community in is through an annual open house. The hospital has attracted hundreds of people with the event each December.

As a means to expand the preventive health care mission, the hospital has distributed toothbrushes at community events.

Helping people keep track of insurance options is another vital community service, Aldrich said, especially with the complicated nature of the subject. Cottage Hospital has contracts with all five providers under the state’s insurance exchange.

The focus on education is part of Cottage’s mission to “bring people into this hospital when they are not sick,” Aldrich said.

Engagement with people and provision of preventive care are central to modern health care delivery, she added.

Partnerships with other area hospitals are vital, Aldrich added. From sharing physicians with facilities to the north to having the Dartmouth-Hitchcock helicopter at Cottage in a short time, other medical facilities are not really competitors.

As Aldrich said, “We really like working with all our community providers.”

Cottage Hospital and others in the region, Aldrich continued, “all work together for the greater needs of the North Country.”

She concluded, “We’re all here to do the same thing, which is to help the patient.”

Cottage Hospital started serving the region at its original location in 1903. Since finding a new home in 1960, the hospital has added space onsite over the years. For more information, go to: www.cottagehospital.org.