



## Expansion/ renovation building momentum

In 1977 the “new” Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) was opened. With inpatient rooms that capitalized on the beauty of the surroundings, large windows with abundant sunshine, and a talented staff that could put even the most anxious patient at ease, the hospital was a source of pride for the community. Over the past 29 years, AVH has served our community well.

Today the hospital provides state-of-the-art technology and high-quality, attentive, personalized care. But what it doesn't provide is a modern, contemporary facility — private rooms, comfortable waiting areas for families and friends, appropriate flow of patients and staff, and a distinction between inpatients and outpatients.

Thus, planning continues for a contemporary facility, and designs for a new obstetrical (O.B.) department are coming to fruition. The AVH Board of Directors will review detailed architectural drawings of the O.B. department at their October meeting. This expansion/renovation is the final piece of an improvement plan that was approved by the City of Aspen almost two years ago. Other components, already completed, are the cardiology clinic, pharmacy, and operating suites.

In the spring of 2007, we expect to “break ground” on the new O.B. care area. It will

• *Continued on Page 2*

## New CT scanner on the way *64 slices mean better images*

Aspen Valley Hospital's (AVH) partnership with the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation (AVMF) is once again helping AVH acquire state-of-the-art medical equipment. With a \$750,000 grant from AVMF toward the \$1.4-million piece of equipment, AVH is preparing for the installation of the most advanced CT scanner available today. According to radiologist Dave Hollander, MD, the number of “slices” is how the value of a CT scanner is determined.

The first CT scanner was just one slice, and then technology progressed to four, eight, 16, 32, and 64 slices. “The 64-slice is what you'd find in some, but not all, large medical and research centers,” said Dr. Hollander.

AVH's new 64-slice scanner, manufactured by Siemens, benefits healthcare in a number of ways:

- Image quality is improved.
- It takes less time to perform a test.
- There is less patient movement, resulting in better images.
- It makes accessible exams that were not previously available.

The new scanner brings a distinct advantage in evaluating trauma patients, according to Bill Rodman, MD, trauma surgeon. “Because it is exponentially faster, we'll have less motion artifacts so the scan will

not only be done more expeditiously, but the number of re-scans should be dramatically reduced,” explained Dr. Rodman.

Gordon Gerson, MD, cardiologist, also touts the benefits of the new scanner, noting that it will supplement our current capabilities. He emphasizes that the scanner won't take the place of conventional angiography (diagnostic catheterization), but it definitely enhances AVH's diagnostic capabilities with state-of-the-art non-invasive tests. “CT angiography will be used in conjunction with exercise stress testing,” Dr. Gerson said. “While stress testing looks at physiology, CT angiography looks at

• *Continued on Page 2*



*The 64-slice CT scanner is the most advanced CT scanner available today.*

# Bird flu update: *Stay informed, be prepared*

Avian influenza (bird flu) is not grabbing headlines the way it did a few months ago. If media attention has dissipated, however, the potential danger has not. A pandemic still could occur, and you should be prepared.

Pitkin County Emergency Management takes an “all hazards” approach to disaster planning. “No matter what the threat, steps are in place to respond, whether it’s an avalanche or a wildfire,” says Ellen Anderson, county Emergency Manager. “We have an organizational model we have used for 20 years, covering every function that needs to be addressed. That should be reassuring to everyone.”

For example, an Incident Management Team meets biweekly to prepare for the possibility of an avian flu outbreak in the Aspen area — from estimating how many pairs of latex gloves crews will need, to working out a public communications plan.

Like the local governmental agencies, you can do your part to prepare for an avian flu outbreak. Ellen recommends

taking the same steps you would for other emergencies that would require you to stay at home for an extended period of time.

“We have time, so plan for it,” Ellen says. “That way, if it does happen, we’re all prepared.”

## **A word about avian flu and flu shots**

Currently, no vaccine to protect against avian flu is available. However, a strain of the avian flu that is now abundant in Asia may mix with an influenza virus that is more prevalent in the United States. The Asian virus could then mutate to become more easily transmitted from human to human. Therefore, it is very important to receive available flu vaccine this fall to prevent opportunities for the viruses to mutate and become even more deadly forms of influenza.

And, as always, hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes are easy ways for everyone to help stop the spread of flu.

## **Items to have on hand in case of a disaster**

- Cash and credit cards
- Copies of important information, such as bank and insurance records, and phone numbers
- Non-perishable food, bottled water, and a non-electric can opener
- Essential medicines
- First-aid kit
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Supplies for pets, if needed

## **Expansion/renovation** • *Continued from Page 1*

expand to the north of the existing area and will offer large private rooms, a family lounge, therapeutic whirlpool tubs, and more. The project will be carefully managed to avoid any disruption of patient care.

With a threefold increase in the number of births since 1977, the expansion and modernization of the existing space is needed to accommodate our increased patient volumes and to meet today’s expectations for comfort and privacy.

Watch for more information about our exciting new plans in the coming months.

*Architects discuss the O.B. expansion/renovation with CEO Dave Ressler (center).*



## **New CT scanner**

• *Continued from Page 1*

anatomy.” With the two, our current diagnostic capabilities are significantly expanded.

Dr. Rodman added that CT angiography will also help to more completely evaluate trauma to the carotid artery, which has been identified in certain seat belt injuries.

“When I joined the AVH medical staff 12 years ago, the philosophy was to continuously update our technology and provide state-of-the-art diagnostic capabilities,” explained Dr. Hollander. “The purchase of the new scanner is consistent with that philosophy. We are grateful to the Aspen Valley Medical Foundation for helping us achieve our goals.”

The new equipment will be up and running for the upcoming ski season. During installation, a mobile CT scanner will be utilized in order to prevent any disruption of service.

# With scenery like ours, don't let allergies keep you indoors

The Aspen area is world famous for its unspoiled natural beauty. For many residents and visitors, however, the sagebrush, cottonwood trees, tumbleweeds, and grassy pastures also represent something less pleasing to the senses: allergies. Even worse is the fact that many of Colorado's native plants pollinate at different times of the year, providing the opportunity for months of allergy-related misery.

If you suffer from allergies, Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) offers comprehensive testing that can help pinpoint your specific allergens for more effective symptom management.

Contrary to popular belief, allergy testing is neither painful nor time-consuming. AVH respiratory therapist Shannon Hicks performs a type of test in which drops of common allergens are scratched or pricked on the patient's skin, usually on the back. Reactions usually occur within 20 minutes. The affected area of skin is then cleansed and, if needed, a topical anti-itch ointment may be applied. Normally, the entire appointment lasts only about 45 minutes.

Once your allergy "triggers" are identified, you and your doctor can work together to minimize your symptoms through medication management or other



*Shannon Hicks, RT, performs a skin allergy test.*

treatment options. In the majority of cases, allergy management is simple, inexpensive, and effective. "Unless you have severe reactions," Shannon says, "you may just need to take over-the-counter medicine to control symptoms during certain times of the year."

If allergies are affecting your enjoyment of Aspen's scenic wonders, your doctor can tell you about the benefits of allergy testing. AVH also hosts regular clinics with Gary Cott, MD, and Richard Weber, MD, from National Jewish Hospital, in Denver. For more information about allergy clinics or testing services at AVH, call 1-888-797-0627.

## *Margi Slater* Nurse of the Year

Obstetrical nurse Margi Slater recently received the ultimate honor from her peers: Aspen Valley Hospital Nurse of the Year. Margi was recognized for her leadership qualities, nursing excellence, patient care, and commitment to the nursing profession.

Other nominees for the award were: Belinda Faulhaber, Judy Evans, and E.O. Anderson, house supervisors; Rachel Shuck, Marcia Hone, and Terry Larson, patient care unit; P.J. Wallace, same-day surgery; Scarlett Bland, intensive care unit; and Melody Durham, cardiac rehabilitation.



*Margi Slater, RN*

## Specialty Services at AVH

In a small town like Aspen, it is impossible to effectively provide for every medical specialty need. Populations simply aren't large enough to support many specialized doctors, nor do patient volumes enable the specialty physician to maintain his/her skills. But at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH), we have several specialists who come to Aspen on a regular basis, thus serving local needs with top-notch physicians from larger cities. In addition to seeing patients, these physicians work closely with primary care doctors to help ensure continuity of care.

AVH's visiting specialists include:

### Allergy and Pulmonology

Gary Cott, MD  
Richard Weber, MD

### Gastroenterology

Gerard Tomasso, MD

### Oncology

Doug Rovira, MD

### Rheumatology

Aryeh Fischer, MD

### Urology

Jeffrey Fegan, MD  
Jamie Lowe, MD  
Brian Murphy, MD

In addition, and on the AVH site, Dr. Gordon Gerson offers cardiology services, Drs. Bill Rodman and John Schultz provide care through our gastroenterology clinic, and Dr. Giora Hahn holds pain management clinics. Of course, many specialists are also available at their private practices in Aspen and the surrounding area.

For a physician referral or more information about the AVH medical staff, call 544-1296.

# New high-tech generator helps ensure power and patient safety

The last place you want to be when the power goes off is in surgery or on life-support equipment. Thanks to a new backup emergency generator, patients at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) have renewed assurance that critical functions will continue even in the event of a power outage.

During the past few decades, the valley's population growth has outpaced the community infrastructure's ability to supply electricity. As a result, interruptions in service — from brief "hiccups" to sustained outages — have become a common occurrence.

AVH's sophisticated new Kohler generator has twice the capacity of its predecessor and can provide power without refueling for up to seven days. It will also meet future needs as the hospital's expansion gets underway.

AVH engineer John Schied led a team of engineers who worked for 18 months to find the generator that would be the "best fit" for AVH. A grant from the state Department of Local Affairs covered more than half the cost of the project.

In case of an interruption in the power supply, the new generator will

automatically kick into service within 10 seconds, providing electricity to critical areas such as the surgery department, intensive care unit, patient monitoring equipment, laboratory, imaging services, and emergency lighting.

"This is a critical piece of equipment for the hospital's mission," Schied says. "We couldn't run the hospital without it."



*John Schied, AVH Director of Operations*

## Calendar of Events

### What's New with Hip and Knee Arthritis

Monday, October 23,  
5:30 - 7 p.m.

Monday, November 27,  
5:30 - 7 p.m.

Aspen Valley Hospital  
544-1295 to sign up

### Community Blood Drive

Tuesday, October 24,  
Noon - 5:30 p.m.

Health and Human Services Building  
(970) 244-2555 for more information

### Senior Health Fair

Friday, November 3,  
8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

For those age 60 and older  
Aspen Valley Hospital

544-1296 for more information

## Holiday Bazaar

Wednesday, November 15,  
2 - 6 p.m. at the

Aspen Valley Hospital Gift Shop

Here's your chance to find great buys on holiday gifts. Refreshments will be served — don't miss it!



ASPEN VALLEY  
HOSPITAL

0401 CASTLE CREEK ROAD ASPEN, COLORADO 81611

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
FMC  
33069

