



ECH opens new office building, heart center

By Julia Cooper, Special to the Town Crier

El Camino Hospital unveiled a new medical office building July 18 in a grand-opening ceremony honoring longtime donors.

Melchor Pavilion, a three-story, 66,000-foot structure primarily housing medical offices, was named for Norma and Jack Melchor in honor of their longtime contributions to the hospital, according to Jon Friedenberg, president of the El Camino Hospital Foundation.

"Their cumulative giving is quite significant," Friedenberg said, noting that the Melchors donated the land on which the hospital was built in 1969. The couple was also recognized for their active involvement in hospital operations and for collectively being the largest donors in hospital history.



Friedenberg

The building will include a cancer center, opening in November, and components of a new heart and vascular program. Friedenberg said he expects the move-in process to be completed by January.

The El Camino Hospital Board of Directors approved the decision to name the building after the Melchors at its July 12 meeting.

Also at the meeting, the board authorized interim CEO Marla Gularte to enter into negotiating a three-year agreement with Cardinal Health, a pharmacy-management company hired to make the pharmacy medical information system, ECHO, more user-friendly. ECHO, which maintains patient records and is used by hospital staff to place orders for medicines and tests, has been plagued by problems since its March inception.

Additionally, the board approved its \$355 million operating budget for fiscal year 2006-2007.

South Asian Heart Center

The hospital's new South Asian Heart Center (SAHC), open since May, has already accumulated a six-month waiting list, according to George Stanley, member of the El Camino Hospital Foundation Board of Directors.

"The center is extremely busy," said SAHC Executive Director Ashish Mathur. Internet inquiries have especially been high, Mathur said, with 1,273 Web site visitors and 200 requests for screenings since June.

The new program is dedicated to assessing heart disease risk in patients of South Asian descent. Individuals with origins traced to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka are four times as likely to develop heart disease compared with the general population because of specific genetic risk factors.

"There is an epidemic of heart disease in the South Asian community," Mathur said, with 50 percent of heart attacks occurring before age 50 for South Asians, while the average age for the general male population is 65.8, and 70.4 for the general female population.

The non-profit SAHC aims to have a long-term impact on patients' nutrition and lifestyle, Mathur said. Although the center does not offer treatment, it provides education for patients to take back to their own primary-care physicians.

"Our hope is that patients move down categories of risk," Mathur said.

The center's official community opening will take place Sept. 19 with an open house.