

WILKES

REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER



**QUALITY HAS
ITS REWARDS**

THE DOCTORS ARE IN

**SPECIAL
DELIVERY**

New birthing center combines
high-tech, soft touch

Wilkes Regional Medical Center is committed to being an outstanding medical center dedicated to the health of our community. We demonstrate this commitment through quality focused care, excellent customer service, and trusted relationships with our patients. Our overall mission is to provide effective, compassionate medical care and to promote healthy lifestyles within our community.

Wilkes Regional Medical Center is owned by the Town of North Wilkesboro and is governed by the WRMC Hospital Operating Corporation a conscientious group of community leaders who volunteer their time. Wilkes Regional has been providing quality health care for the residents of Wilkes County for more than 80 years.

The first Wilkes hospital opened with only 10 beds. Today, the 130-bed Wilkes Regional Medical Center offers comprehensive health care to the region, including but not limited to cardiology, surgery, diagnostic imaging, dialysis, home health care and women's services.

If you should ever require our services, we, at Wilkes Regional Medical Center, will work hard to make your stay as comfortable as possible. Our primary goal is for patients to have a successful recovery.

On behalf of the entire staff, I extend a warm welcome to you.

Sincerely,
Ted G. Chapin, President/CEO
Wilkes Regional Medical Center



The Road to Recovery

Patients make strides at hospital's rehab services unit



Physical and speech therapists and physical trainers team up to help patients get back on their feet faster.

Through a bright glass window at the Wilkes Regional Medical Center's rehabilitation services unit, physical therapist Tim Wilson waves hello to a former patient who is on his way in for a workout at the Wellness Center next door.

"It's great to see someone who maybe six months ago had to be brought here in a wheelchair, and now he's back to a normal state of mobility," says Wilson, who has worked with the hospital for 15 years.

"When the patients get stronger and no longer require our services, we encourage them to continue a safe, regular exercise program," Wilson says. "It's very easy for them to do this because the Wellness Center is in the same building, so it's not unusual to look over and see someone who may have needed one-on-one therapy at one

time now working out on their own, which is great."

In 1997, the rehabilitation services unit moved from inside the hospital to a shared space with the Wellness Center, occupying 10,000 of the center's 36,000 square feet of floor space. While both share a heated indoor pool and certain aerobics areas, the rehabilitation services unit has its own treatment rooms, mat tables, parallel bars and other specialty exercise equipment designed to help patients regain mobility.

Today, the unit employs a group of four physical therapists and three assistants, two occupational therapists and three assistants, one speech therapist, and one certified physical trainer.

Wilson says an average of 60 patients are treated each day, and there's always someone around to help, from open until close.

Special DELIVERY

NEW BIRTHING CENTER COMBINES HIGH-TECH
WITH SOFT TOUCH FOR COMPREHENSIVE CARE

Expectant mothers due to deliver at Wilkes Regional Medical Center have more than the arrival of baby in store – they now have a new, \$4 million setting in which to welcome their bundles of joy. Aptly named New Beginnings, the hospital's newly expanded birthing center, which opened in April 2005, offers state-of-the-art facilities and high-quality care for the tiniest of patients and their families.

"It's a place where we put science and technology to work for our patients and where women can feel comfortable and safe surrounded by some of the most qualified and experienced doctors, nurses, and staff in the region," says Debbie Mitchell, the hospital's OB nurse manager.

Enhancements to the hospital's birthing center include the addition of five new labor and delivery rooms, new C-section and recovery rooms, as well as new monitored observation rooms. The center's advanced tracking technology takes peace of mind to the next level for new parents; every baby born at the New Beginnings birthing center is protected by a security bracelet that enables hospital staff to monitor an infant's whereabouts within the center at all times and identify an infant's parents based on unique electronic code numbers.

Each of the family-oriented labor and delivery rooms are equipped with the comforts of home such as sleeping space for family members, contemporary décor, private bathrooms with Jacuzzi tub, television, VCR/DVD players, glider rockers and private telephones.

The center also offers a wide range of classes to prepare expectant parents for childbirth, like Lamaze, breastfeeding instruction, infant CPR, nutritional counseling, sibling classes and parent-to-be tours of New Beginnings in advance of the big event.

"We welcome between 500 and 550 new little residents to our community here each year, so it's important that we offer the best facility and care possible," Mitchell says.



Dr. Mike Blackwell examines one of 500 babies born each year at the hospital's New Beginnings birthing center.

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Wilkes Regional Medical Center • Photo by Brian McCord

HOME IS WHERE THE *Care* IS

HEMOCARE DIVISION HELPS GET PATIENTS
BACK TO THE COMFORTS OF HOME

At the age of 24, Teresa Nance was tragically wounded by a stray bullet that left her without considerable movement and sensation below the neck. Today, Nance is a participant in Wilkes Regional Medical Center's homecare program. She's also an active advocate for the elderly and disabled.

"At first, I really didn't have a choice of where to go for care because there was no comprehensive program here at the time and my parents were unable to care for me themselves due to health issues, so I had to go to Winston-Salem," she says. "Home Care of Wilkes Regional Medical Center has allowed me to live on my own

in my own community, which is very important to me."

According to Pam Howard, CAP Director for the Wilkes Regional Medical Center, CAP (the in-home aide program) provides a unique approach to homecare because an individualized plan is developed for each patient by a case management team consisting of a social worker and registered nurse. The plan includes strategies for both medical and non-medical services that are necessary for the patient to remain at home safely and comfortably.

In addition to in-home aide services, the Home Care division also offers home-health services,

or skilled nursing services, physical therapists, speech therapists and occupational therapists, that are provided in the patient's home.

When comfort and pain control are needed for terminally ill patients and their families, the Home Care division of Wilkes Regional Medical Center also provides Hospice care in the home. The Hospice program, funded in part by the United Way of Wilkes County, also offers nursing services, prescription drugs, medical supplies, bereavement and chaplin services for all ages to help families in Wilkes and surrounding counties deal with issues of grief and loss.

An Eye Always Open to the Future

Hospital's diagnostic imaging center adds new \$5 million outpatient facility

What began as a typical X-ray department at Wilkes Regional Medical Center in the 1960s is now a thriving diagnostic imaging center, providing community residents with access to some of the world's most advanced imaging services.

"We perform an average of 56,000 total exams per year," says Betty G. Ellis, RTR, RDMS, RVT, Assistant Director of Diagnostic Imaging. "Our GE Lightspeed CT scanner was one of the first in the state, and we're constantly implementing other new technologies as they become available."

Adding to its current capabilities at the main hospital location – including a picture-archiving communications system that provides doctors with access to electronic images rather than film – Wilkes Regional Medical Center also plans to open a \$5 million outpatient center in late 2006. The new center, which will be located in the West Park medical office complex near

the hospital, is expected to provide a wide range of equally high-tech services including Mammography, Computed Tomography (CT) Ultrasound, MRI, Bone Densitometry and regular X-rays.

According to Ellis, the new center will be divided into two separate suites – one dedicated to general services and one dedicated to women's Imaging services, including mammography – providing patients with convenient access to services and more spacious areas for treatment.

"Radiology is a dynamic field and is changing constantly. We are right up there at the top of the mark with the latest technology," Ellis says.



Jack McLarney looks at an MRI.



Wellness Center helps residents keep fit, stay active

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning at 8 a.m., it's a sure bet you'll find Walter and Mary McSwain at Wilkes Regional Medical Center's exercise facility alongside their newfound workout buddies.

"It's like one big happy family. If you miss a day, they'll ask where you were. Working out here really makes exercise a lot of fun," says Mary McSwain, who at the age of 75 has more get up and go than the average 20-something.

The McSwains have been active members of the Wellness Center since 1991, but recommitted themselves to exercise in 1998 when they both experienced heart trouble during the same week. After his triple bypass surgery, Walter entered the chronic disease management program at the

hospital's Wellness Center. He then gradually worked his way back to a general, self-managed exercise routine after recovery.

"There are so many benefits to being members here, and we feel that it is one of the primary reasons why we're as healthy as we are today. I'm a young 75 and he's an even younger 80," says McSwain, who today, along with her husband, volunteers at the hospital as a member of the auxiliary and helped raise funds for the hospital's new birthing center and helicopter pad project.

The McSwain's enthusiasm for the full-service exercise complex and adjacent rehab center is not uncommon, says Cindy Bentley, director of both facilities.

"We have families and people of all ages who come here for health and recreation, and we offer all of the amenities you would expect from a full-service facility, including child care and flexible hours, making it more convenient for the many people who stay so busy," Bentley says.

Open seven days a week, the Wellness Center moved to its current location, a 36,000-foot facility just down the hill from the hospital, in 1997. It features a wide range of cardiovascular machines, weight equipment, locker rooms, and an indoor pool, as well as a calendar full of aerobic classes.



Wilkes Regional Medical Center's Wellness Center is open to all Wilkes County residents, even if not a patient.



Patients find both comfort and excellent care at Wilkes Regional Medical Center's dialysis center.

FINDING THEIR *Comfort* ZONE

DIALYSIS CENTER GETS HIGH MARKS FROM PATIENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Patients undergoing dialysis at Wilkes Regional Medical Center give the hospital high marks for its investment in a dedicated dialysis center to serve the local community. Now the appreciation is extending to include the dialysis center's upcoming capacity expansion and cosmetic improvements. In early 2006, the center will increase its capacity from 11 to 16 dialysis stations and occupy medical offices formerly adjacent to the facility.

Beyond these upgrades and expansions, however, patients and their families say the staff's warmth and caring is the center's biggest asset, making the difficult process of dialysis easier to bear. The staff was

recently awarded the Outstanding Performance for Vascular Access award from the Southeastern Kidney Council.

The dialysis center welcomes patients who are traveling and are in need of transient dialysis services. Transient dialysis gives patients freedom to travel throughout the United States and still receive needed dialysis treatments.

"It really works both ways. We appreciate our patients, too. We're all very excited about the improvements that will make our patients more comfortable and accommodate additional people who need our services," says Peggy Cook, department nurse manager for the dialysis center.

According to Cook, the staff

often goes to great lengths to make patients feel at home and well cared for. "It may sound small, but something as simple as a warmed blanket and friendly conversation can make such a difference to these patients," Cook says.

Each spring, Cook and her staff host a cookout for patients and their families with live music and barbecue, providing an opportunity for everyone to interact outside of a medical setting.

"At the end of the day, it's all about providing good quality care to our patients," Cook says. "If we can help prolong their lives in any way, you'd better bet we're going to try our best to do it. Our focus is on patient safety, patient comfort and convenience."

The Doctors Are Now In

Physicians from around the country
are settling into Wilkes County

In August 2004, Dr. Adrienne Classen packed up her belongings, her husband and her horses in La Honda, Calif. and hit the road for a cross-country trek bound for her new home in Wilkes County. Before her departure, however, the energetic pediatrician received several job offers in cities and towns across the region, but she remained set on Wilkes County for its quality of life and for the caliber of physicians she met in her practice there.

"It's funny, I lived in California on half an acre for 11 years and never met my neighbors," Classen says. "Then I moved here, and while living on 100 acres I met all of my neighbors within a week. I just love this area. The people are so wonderful and it's so relaxing."

According to Tammy Love, Director of Marketing and Medical Staff Development for Wilkes Regional Medical Center, Classen's story is one of the many successful examples of the hospital's efforts to recruit high-caliber physicians to care for the community.

"We want to attract excellent physicians to Wilkes but we also want to make sure that they feel connected to our community and that they want to call it home," says Love.

One physician with staying power is Dr. John Hettiarachchi, a urologist who specializes in prostate and kidney surgery. After completing his residency and fellowship in New York City, he made the move to Wilkes County to develop Piedmont Urology, which offers innovative urological treatment and cutting edge technology.

"I do very advanced surgery, so it was important for me to find a hospital that would provide the sort of equipment and resources I needed. Today we are building a very comprehensive and advanced center that's on par with the major hospitals where I worked in New York. I've been very pleased with the support of the hospital in fulfilling my mission," Hettiarachchi says.

Dr. Carl Hoffman, who came out of retirement in July 2003, relocated to Wilkes County from Wilmington, N.C. to expand the capabilities of the hospital's radiology area and establish a new outpatient diagnostic imaging center.



QUALITY HAS ITS REWARDS

HOSPITAL RECEIVES MULTIPLE
AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Like her colleagues at Wilkes Regional Medical Center, Rhonda Jones is dedicated to providing the highest quality healthcare – and like other areas of the hospital, her unit has been recognized with awards for its excellence.

For Jones, nurse manager in the hospital's skilled nursing unit, receiving the 2004 CareScout award for top-performing skilled nursing facility makes her work even more rewarding. Of the 16,400 government-certified nursing home facilities in the United States, Wilkes Regional Medical Center is only one of 151 that have received this honor.

"When the state comes in and tells you that your program is nearly perfect, it's quite an honor. Then, when CareScout looks at those rankings and makes these awards, it provides even more of a confirmation that we are doing our jobs well," says Jones, who manages nurses in the 10-bed unit.

Nearby at the hospital's dialysis center, Peggie Cook, department nurse manager, is equally proud of the award her team recently received from the Southeastern Kidney Council.

In fact, the hospital, homecare and lab have all received JCAHO accreditation (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations), while JCAHO national quality improvement goals for the hospital in heart failure and pneumonia are above the performance of most accredited organizations.

"If you walk into our main lobby, you'll see all of these awards displayed prominently. We're very proud of our employees and for the quality of care we provide to the community," says Barbara Overby, who manages regulatory requirements and accreditation for the hospital.

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