

# Touchette Regional Hospital undergoing two major renovations

By ALAN J. ORTBALS

For more than 100 years, Touchette Regional Hospital has delivered high-quality care to Metro East residents. And with two new expansions on the horizon – a larger emergency department and new behavioral health center – it will serve more patients than ever before.

After a 20-month construction period, Touchette's new \$3 million, 5,200-square-foot emergency department is scheduled to open in December. The larger emergency department features a racetrack design that places nurses and doctors in the center surrounded by the patients. According to Lesley Paterson, vice president of nursing, this contemporary design improves the ability of the ER team to observe, monitor and serve patients quickly and efficiently.

All of the 12 treatment rooms will be private. In addition, there will be two holding areas where patients can comfortably wait for lab and test results, and a new conference room for private consultation with their families.

The emergency department is located close to radiology and the laboratory services. The new layout will enhance access to those areas and will improve connections to the behavioral health center as well as specialty units, including surgery and obstetrics. Patients will experience more privacy as they are moved to other departments of the hospital, located on Bond Avenue in Centreville.

The new emergency department also houses a specialized isolation room with negative air pressure for patients with infectious diseases. This will be complemented by another room where the staff can don isolation gear and a



An artist's sketch of the planned behavioral health center to be added at Touchette Regional Hospital.

separate bathroom to keep both patients with infectious diseases and the staff that is caring for them separate from other ER patients and staff. Touchette has also installed a decontamination chamber to handle patients contaminated by hazardous materials.

"The design of the department gives our patients better access to the hospital itself and a streamlined flow from registration and triage to treatment," said Jim Probst, medical director of the emergency department. "That significantly enhances the safety and security of the facility for all patients and family who come to the hospital."

As the emergency department project wraps up, Touchette will break ground on a \$10 million behavioral health center expansion. Linked directly to the ER, the behavioral health center will expand inpatient capacity from 12 beds to 30, serving patients with a variety of medical conditions including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses.

Sulbrena Day, Ph.D., vice president of ancillary services at Touchette, noted that there is a growing need for mental health services locally, regionally and across the nation. Some of the factors driving this demand, according to Day, are cutbacks in state spending, which have reduced the number of available beds in the state of Illinois; cutbacks at Illinois prisons that housed some of the mentally ill; unemployment; and more. "Mental illness touches all walks of life," said Day. "It's not restricted to a particular population, economic status, age group or demographic."

"This state-of-the-art facility will improve access and change the face of the delivery of mental health services through its open concept," said Desarie Holmes, Ph.D., director of behavioral health at Touchette. "Our operations and health-care team of physicians, psychologists, social workers and nurses, are trained and committed to delivering coordinated care that improves the lives

of those we serve."

Not only will the new addition enable Touchette to serve more patients who need to stay for treatment, but it will also greatly expand its outpatient capacity for patients with a variety of behavioral health concerns. The hospital's outpatient treatment program serves adolescents from 12-16 years of age as well as adults. Some therapies are provided on an individual basis; others in a group or family setting.

The expanded ER and the new behavioral health center are not the only reasons Touchette stands out in the region. Earlier this year Consumer Reports named Touchette as top hospital in the state of Illinois for patient safety.

"It's exciting," said Tom Mikkelsen, M.D., Touchette's chief operating officer. "Our entire team has worked diligently to deliver the safest possible care, and it's paying off. I couldn't be more pleased with our team's dedication and commitment to safety."

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