

Duplin General To Ask Commissioners For \$1 Million

Duplin County General Hospital will ask the county for \$1 million to pay bills and upgrade facilities, hospital officials have told the Board of Commissioners.

The hospital's board of directors in a special meeting last week on Tuesday night, agreed to ask the commissioners to fund its \$1 million list of needs, which were outlined for the commissioners last month by hospital board member Dr. C.L. Quinn.

The commissioners must now decide how much of the full amount they can afford to spend in any single fiscal year.

Hospital board finance chairman H.M. Price proposed asking the county for \$200,000 in the next fiscal year. The county fiscal year begins July 1; the hospital's fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

The hospital's most recent audit report showed operating expenses for the 1982-83 fiscal year exceeded income from patient care by \$209,749. Revenues from other sources — including the county — reduced the deficit to \$110,218.

At the request of the commissioners, Quinn prepared a summary of the hospital's needs and possible ways of

meeting them. One of his suggestions was to levy a property tax to support the hospital. The county board can levy a tax of up to 8 cents per \$100 assessed valuation for hospital support.

The county has contributed money to the hospital every year since the facility was built during the 1950s. The hospital owes \$704,830 on various accounts. Of that amount, \$200,750 has been outstanding for from 75 to 136 days.

Officials said all bills will be paid, but some later than others. Late payments will be costlier because there won't be discounts for prompt payment.

Quinn estimated the cost of immediate equipment and physical plant needs at slightly more than \$500,000. Another \$500,000 is needed to bring payments up to date, he said.

The hospital's current operating costs have exceeded income from patient payments in most months of recent years. That is because of an unusually high percentage of Medicaid and Medicare patients for which the hospital is paid about 70 percent of its billings, hospital administrator R.E. Harrell said.

The difference has been

made up from county appropriations and other outside funds, Harrell said. Last year's receipts from Medicaid, Medicare and mental health programs totaled \$404,518 less than the hospital charges.

Harrell said the average cost per day for a Medicare

patient last fiscal year was \$263.51, of which patients paid \$25.71 and Medicare \$168.52. That left \$69.28 unpaid and uncollectable. The average daily cost for a Medicaid patient was \$195.63, of which Medicaid paid \$165.63, leaving \$30.00 unpaid.

An increase in patient load would help the hospital because most of the new patients would be paying their full bills through private insurance.

The amount of Medicare and Medicaid patient care is about normal for a county of Duplin's size, Quinn said.

AT NCSU AGRICULTURE DINNER - Pictured above, (L to R) are Nurham O. Warwick, state education official from Sampson County; John Sledge, president of the N.C. Farm Bureau Federation; Senator Harold W. Hardison (D), Lenoir; and Ms. Lois Britt, Duplin County extension service chairman. They are part of the nearly 500 persons who participated in the N.C. State University agriculture-legislative dinner at McKimmon Center in Raleigh last week.

The affair was sponsored by the Production Credit Association and the Federal Land Bank Association. Agricultural extension agents, county extension chairman and local extension service advisors from across the state were present. Those making presentations to the group included Lieutenant Governor James Green; Dr. Bruce R. Poulton, Chancellor, NCSU; and Dr. J. E. Legates, dean of the NCSU school of agriculture.

Many Duplin Residents Go To Other Hospitals

A large percentage of Duplin County residents — those who can pay full rates or have insurance — go to hospitals outside the county when they need medical care, which has forced Duplin General Hospital to seek \$1 million in direct financial assistance from the county.

Statistics obtained from the state Medical Care Commission by Ann B. Houston, director of nursing, show that only 36.36 percent of Duplin County residents who were hospitalized in 1981 came to Duplin General in Kenansville.

The 1981 statistics, the most recent available, show 2,316 patients were discharged from the hospital; 6,369 Duplin residents were discharged from all North Carolina hospitals that year.

A higher percentage, 38.29, went to three nearby hospitals — 18.29 to New Hanover Memorial in Wilmington, 10.22 to Lenoir Memorial in Kinston, and 9.78 to Wayne Memorial in Goldsboro. Another 9 percent went to N.C. Memorial in Chapel Hill, Duke University in Durham, or Pitt Memorial in Greenville.

Duplin General was left with an unusually high percentage of Medicaid and Medicare patients. Federal payments for their medical treatments is limited to about 70 percent of hospital billings. The percentage of Medicaid and Medicare patients has increased in the last two years, Dr. C.L. Quinn told fellow members of the hospital's board of directors.

In the first quarter of the

hospital's 1982-83 fiscal year (October through December), adult patients received 4,696 days of hospital care. Patients under the Medicaid and Medicare programs accounted for 3,193 of those days, or 68 percent of the total days of care provided all patients.

During the first quarter of the 1981-82 fiscal year, patients covered by the federal programs received 54 percent of the total number of hospital care days. The average stay of Medicare patients during the first quarter of the 1982-83 fiscal year was 11.83 days, compared with 7.59 days for all patients.

Currently, Quinn said, the number of these patients is normal for Duplin County's population of about 40,000. People covered by Medicaid, Medicare and similar programs account for 70 percent of Duplin General's patients.

The hospital is in a financial squeeze because of the flight to other hospitals of Duplin residents who pay their full bills through private insurance. That problem won't go away until the Duplin hospital can attract county residents, Quinn said.

Signs of scoliosis, the medical term for spinal curvature, are found in approximately five to ten percent of the young people examined. Continued follow-up or treatment is needed in only about two percent of the cases.

Spinal deformities often develop during the years of early adolescence when the young person grows very rapidly, Dr. Scott noted.

Mrs. Helen Ballard, director of nurses for Duplin County Health Department, says that treatment, when necessary, usually consists of a back brace which helps to correct the condition and keeps it from progressing. A brace does not interfere with most activities, including non-contact sports.

Dr. Scott indicates that parents of students found to have signs of scoliosis will be notified and urged to take their child to a physician for further evaluation. The examination requires only that the child bend forward and bend to the sides. The examining personnel observe the spine and note any possible curvature of the spine such as upper spine curve, lower spine curve, rib hump, uneven shoulders and uneven hip.

Scoliosis Screening Program For Duplin County School Children

The North Carolina Crippled Children's program in conjunction with school and health authorities have announced plans for a screening program designed to find back abnormalities among school children in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades in Duplin County.

Dr. Alice S. Scott, assistant superintendent, says the simple examination procedure which will be handled by professionals will require about 60 seconds. The health and school officials are urging local parents to grant permission for the simple tests. School children will bring home special forms for parents to sign giving their approval.

The objective is to detect spinal irregularities which can more easily be corrected in young children. Too often, officials say, back curvatures are not discovered until so late that permanent damage has been done and drastic treatment is required.

Teachey Man Jailed On Larceny Charges

Jarvis Lee Melvin, 25, of Teachey, was being held in Duplin County Jail in Kenansville last week under \$2,000 bond on charges of breaking and entering and larceny in connection with an incident in Warsaw on Monday.

The victim told Warsaw police he saw broken glass on his front porch floor when he returned home from a walk. He said a man came up to him, told him someone had broken into the house and offered to come in to help him. The victim said as they entered the house, the man grabbed his wallet from his back pocket and fled.

Warsaw police arrested the suspect late Monday and have recovered the wallet.

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Kenansville Jaycees Ask For Nominations For Distinguished Service Awards

Kenansville citizens are asked to support the 1983 Distinguished Service Awards program by submitting nominations for the following awards: Outstanding Fire Fighter, Law Enforcement Officer, Farmer, Educator, Senior Citizen, as well as the Distinguished Service Award.

The over-all D.S.A. is for people who have done an excellent job of bettering the

community.

Nominations should have the name of the individual, address, and as much information about them as possible. You should also list why you feel they should be considered for this award.

Send all nominations to the Kenansville Jaycees, P.O. Box 490, Kenansville, NC 28349, no later than April 6, 1983.

"We really need your input," say the Jaycees.

E.E. Smith Barbecue

The Kenansville Elementary School and P.T.O. will sponsor a barbecue supper in the school cafeteria April 15 from 4 until 8 p.m. The menu consists of barbecue, potato salad, slaw, hushpuppies and tea or coffee. The plates will be \$3. Desserts will also be avail-

able for 50 cents.

You may eat in or take out. Tickets will go on sale March 30. You may purchase your tickets from any P.T.O. member, school faculty member or student.

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