

New faces,
new places:

Albemarle Family Practice, Ltd.



MEETING HEALTH CARE NEEDS — Albemarle Family Practice, Ltd., located in Perquimans County at the "Five Mile Y" opened in mid-December and since has had

overwhelming response from the public. Administrator Ronnie Sawyer explained that the location was selected due to its cen-

tralization in an area where additional rural health care was needed. Patients come from throughout the Albemarle area.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a continuation in a series of weekly articles featuring new businesses and professional people in and around Perquimans County.)

Text & Photos
By KATHY M. NEWBERN

The patient's time is just as important as the doctor's time. That's the philosophy at Albemarle Family Practice, Ltd.

Privately owned by Dr. Clement Lucas, Albemarle Family Practice started offering additional needed health care services to Albemarle residents in mid-December. And no, more than six months later, the practice has become well established with work loads proving that the need existed.

The combined private practice and mini medical center is located in Perquimans County at the "Five Mile Y." Its patients however come not only from Perquimans, but other surrounding areas such as Tyrrell, Chowan and Gates counties. The location was selected due to its centralization in an area where additional rural health care has been needed.

Discussing the success of Albemarle Family Practice, Administrator Ronnie Sawyer said, "There is a need in this area for better health care and more of it." And with that attitude, the practice began. He added that the lack of physicians in Tyrrell and Gates counties and previously in Perquimans County, played a role in establishing the need for the practice in northeastern North Carolina.

If anyone had any doubts that the additional health care would be well received, they need only check the records. As full-time physician, Dr. Lucas explained that he anticipated a four to six month period to get an active practice going. "However," he said, "in

six weeks we were overrun with people."

Despite the overwhelming response by the public, Dr. Lucas and his staff continue to emphasize personal patient care. He summed up the attitude well by saying, "We'd rather see fewer people in the day and give them more personal attention."

However, Albemarle Family Practice is managing to see many people daily and still provide that personal attention that Dr. Lucas demands. In keeping with the idea of the importance of the patient's time, the practice is carrying out an ongoing time study. For each patient, a record is kept of the time of his arrival, when he is seen by the doctor, and the time when he leaves the office. This, according to Sawyer, allows the staff to evaluate how well they are keeping with that fundamental idea and professionalism. At present, the results have been gratifying.

The practice is operated on the basis of appointments being preferred, however walk-in patients are accepted and without much waiting.

MODERN & INNOVATIVE

The facility itself and the equipment at Albemarle Family Practice can only be described as modern and innovative. According to Sawyer, "The lab here is just as sophisticated as you're going to find anywhere in the area."

The built-in lab facilities are part of what makes Albemarle Family Practice more than just a doctor's office. At present, there are employed four office people (which includes an administrator, and an assistant, one lab technician, two nurses, one nurse's aide, and a full-time physician.

Additional help is needed to meet the growing demand. Concerning that, Dr. Lucas said, "We are seeking only the highest qualified and most well trained people to work

here. We want only Board certified physicians and American trained physicians to deliver services in areas we've identified."

Along with additional help will come additional office hours. At present Dr. Lucas is on call 24 hours daily. The regular office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. In addition, the practice is open from 6 to 9 p.m. on Tuesdays and from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. This reflects the staff's understanding that everyone does not become ill on a regular 9-5 schedule.

EXCITING FUTURE

While many would think Albemarle Family Practice, as it is, offers much in meeting health care needs, Dr. Lucas foresees where much more can be done. Because of that foresight, plans are in the making for a 26-acre health care park to be developed at the site.

Dr. Richard Hines of Edenton and Dr. Lucas, have formed a partnership in undertaking this major project, something both have long been interested in. Funding at present is totally from private sources.

Phase I of the current plans call for an estimated \$1 million building of approximately 25,000 square feet offering varied services.

Such professional services will include a pharmacy, optometrist, x-rays, emergency room, optometrist, physical therapy, dentistry, surgery, family doctors, and many other possibilities.

The project is being designed, according to Lucas, by "probably the most innovative health care team in the country." Its appearance will be rather "unique looking" and is designed for flexibility so it can easily be added to or taken from allowing rearrangement of inside space. It will include total landscape design.



SIGN OF FUTURE PLANS — While Albemarle Family Practice, Ltd. has enjoyed a thriving business since opening its doors, plans for meeting the needs of local citizens have not stopped there. A partner-

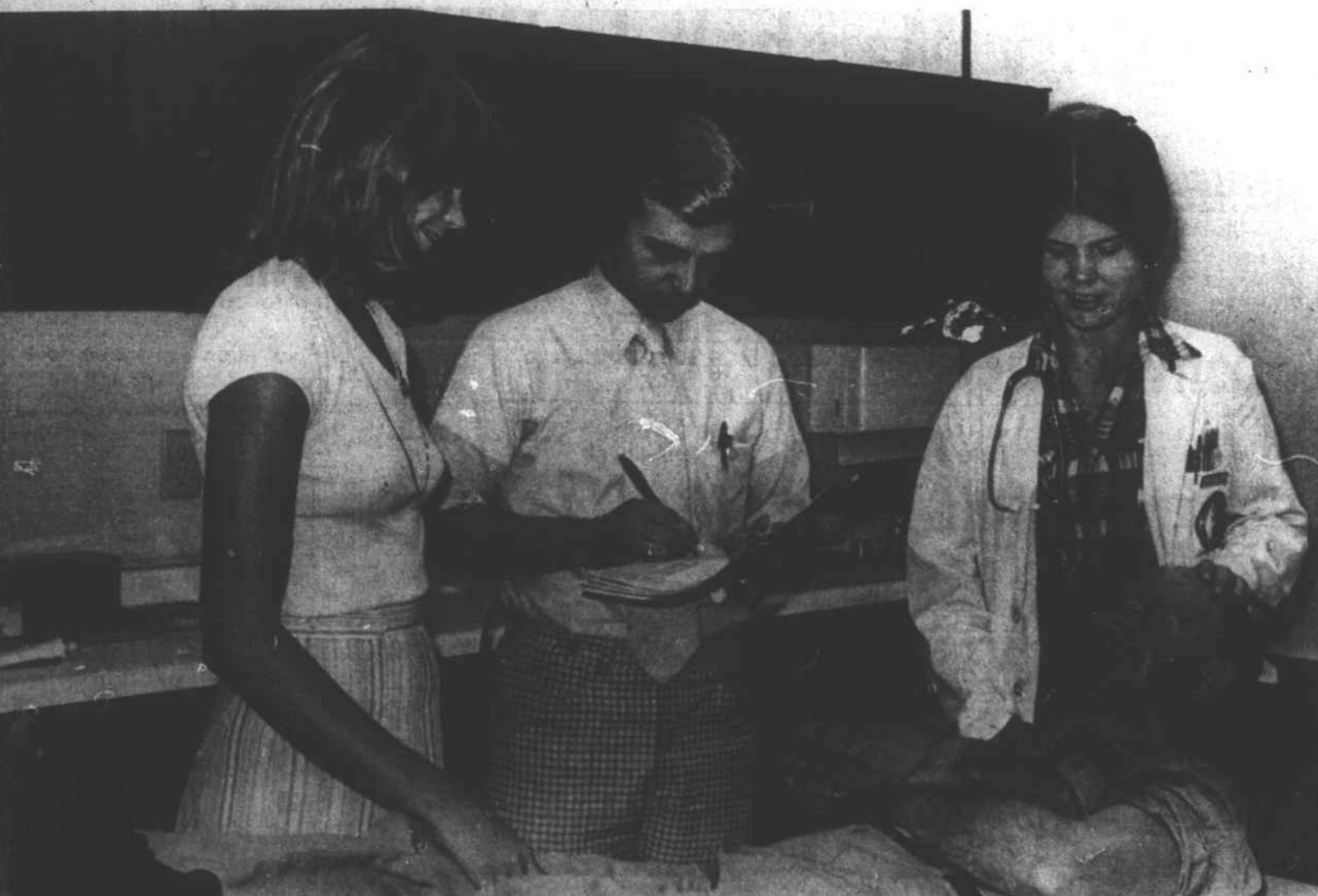
ship by practice owner Dr. Clement Lucas and Dr. Richard Hines of Edenton has been formed to undertake a health service park project. The park will be located on 26 acres of land where Albemarle Family

Practice, Ltd. is currently operating. The first phase of the project, expected to be completed in about a year, has a projected cost of \$1 million.



EFFICIENT OFFICE — Part of the businesses and professional firms includes much paper work and scheduling

for efficiency. Two office employees which keep things running smoothly at Albemarle Family Practice, Ltd. are Dellie Bass (seated) and Brenda Hufton.



PERSONAL ATTENTION — Dr. Clement Lucas and members of his staff have combined the idea of personal attention and saving patients' time as a basic philosophy

at Albemarle Family Practice, Ltd. Above Dr. Lucas, nurse Patti Farless (left) and Bowman Gray Medical School student Sara

Frost comfort one of many patients. Ms. Frost is spending five weeks at the local practice.



MODERN LAB — One feature of the local practice is a modern lab where much work can be done to save patients time. Above, Norma Thomassy, lab technologist, is shown at work.