A history of care...

a future of innovation.

VALLEY VOICES SPECIAL EDITION

2007 celebrates the creation of Public Hospital District No. 1—Valley Medical Center. In this special publication, we examine historical milestones and achievements, and look forward to healthcare innovations to come.
1800s–1910

Medical care was a luxury in South King County in the late 1800s. During this hard-scrabble pioneer era, medical care was characterized by private doctors responding to emergencies and accidents at local logging camps and coal mines.

Creating Access to Healthcare

“For me, Valley Medical Center (VMC) is all about access. We no longer have to travel 20 miles to receive the best medical care that today’s technology and expert physicians can offer. Throughout the years VMC has grown, making tremendous strides to bring our community the care we need, close to home. I remember when the “tunnel” opened on campus in the early 1990s to create a faster connection for traffic to our Emergency Room. I also remember the opening of The Breast Center in 2002, which gave women access to the most current technology for early detection of breast cancer. That saves lives!

“And now we’re working on the new Emergency Department Tower—the size of a football field—to make sure South King County continues to have the emergency care and disaster preparedness it needs. I am honored to be a part of these exciting times.”

Carole Anderson, President
Public Hospital District No. 1
Board of Commissioners
Norwegian-born Dr. Adolph Bronson built the area’s first hospital in 1911. The modest two-story facility contained only 15 rooms, staffed by up to five nurses.

A Solid Foundation for the Future

“I came to Renton after college and settled here to raise a family. For 20 years I served as the Superintendent of the Renton Public School District and I see many parallels between education and the Public Hospital District—Valley Medical Center (VMC). Both institutions have geographical boundaries, an elected board to govern their course, and clinics or schools to provide services throughout the area. It is my belief that education and healthcare are the building blocks of a community. A community that supports its school system and its healthcare—and our community does both with passion—is a strong community with a solid future.

“The comprehensiveness of services and expertise available now at VMC is astounding. This community has had a vision for excellence in healthcare and has supported the hospital’s growth—from the 1965 bond issue expansion that built the current campus to the bond issue 40 years later that drives VMC’s current construction, including the new Emergency Services Tower breaking ground this year. In short, it’s the vision of our community that’s created the VMC of today.”
World War II

Airplane production at Boeing caused Renton’s population to boom during World War II. Public Hospital District No. 1 was established in 1947, and Renton Hospital was built on Rainier Avenue. Now demolished, the building was nicknamed “the wagon wheel” for its hub-and-spoke design.

Admirable Foresight

“As a retired construction worker, my two most memorable jobs were helping to build the Space Needle and helping to build Valley Medical Center (VMC). I had the honor of working on the construction of the hospital at its current Renton site in the late 1960s. My two sons were in the Renton School District at the time, both had been born at VMC’s earlier site in downtown Renton, known as the ‘wagon wheel’ building.

“Looking back, I really admire the foresight of my hospital commissioner predecessors. They took on the ambitious job of enlarging the district and moving the hospital from downtown Renton to a central location between the cities of Renton and Kent. At the time, it was still very much a rural area and the movement of the hospital helped to start the area’s big growth. Our community supported a future of excellence in healthcare back then, and continues that support today. As a result, we have a first-class hospital here.”
1960s

In the 1960s, as advancements in aerospace and other industries brought additional jobs and residents, the boundaries of the hospital district expanded dramatically and a larger hospital was needed. World-renowned architect Edward Durrell Stone designed the original Valley General Hospital, which opened in 1969, and remains as VMC’s main campus.

Building Regional Healthcare

“As 28-year-olds, my wife and I moved from Everett to Kent to manage Old National Bank. The country was celebrating its Bicentennial that year and Kent was still very rural—lots of raw land in Kent sold for less than a dollar a square foot and Valley Medical Center (VMC) was a hospital with just a single building. With five kids, we made numerous trips to VMC’s old, small emergency room. Over the years, as the region grew, so did the hospital, attracting top physicians and launching new and expansive programs to meet community need.

“It makes me proud when people tell me that they got their new hip or their new knee here, for example, because it shows how excellent our services are. Our Orthopedic Services are not only on par with the City of Seattle; they’ve been rated the best in the state and in the top five percent nationally. People used to go to Seattle, but today VMC delivers South King County’s top notch healthcare.”

Mike Miller
Public Hospital District No. 1
Board of Commissioners
A history of care...a future

1990s

In response to massive regional growth and the more hectic lives of residents, in the 1990s VMC created a network of primary and acute care neighborhood clinics throughout the district. The goal of these satellite locations is to bring the excellent healthcare VMC is known for to a location “close to home” for residents.

Part of our Community

“I’ve always been immersed in my community. It’s an honor and a privilege to oversee the care and services at Valley Medical Center (VMC) as a member of the Board of Commissioners. It gives me a sense of pride because I know I’m part of making sure our regional healthcare stays focused on our patients and in step with new technologies and medical developments.

“When I think back over how Renton has grown, it’s so impressive, and VMC has been an integral part of that evolution. Our goal is to continually achieve medical excellence. Everything we do, from The Joint Center to the new Emergency Department breaking ground this year, is done to enhance the level of healthcare available in our own community.”

Carolyn Parnell,
Secretary
Public Hospital
District No. 1
Board of
Commissioners
2000–2009

The new century has seen a dramatic alteration of the hospital campus. In 2006 a new Birth Center and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit was completed. In the spring of 2007 VMC opened its grand new lobby and state-of-the-art Surgery Center. The most dramatic alteration to the campus will be the new Emergency Services Tower, to break ground later this summer and open in 2009. The tower will include a Level III Trauma Center and two floors of underground parking.

Visible Accomplishments

“During my years at Valley Medical Center (VMC), I’ve watched as high technologies have played a larger and larger role in the early detection and effective treatment of disease. It’s been an exciting era in healthcare—an era that continues today and promises a future of even greater innovation.

“Our 2006-2009 major campus renovation has ensured that VMC remains on the cutting edge and is ready for technological innovations to come. Our new Surgery Center suites are 40 percent larger to accommodate the robotics used in today’s minimally invasive procedures. Already nationally renowned in the fields of bariatric, neurological, and joint surgery, VMC’s surgeons now have the best operating rooms technology can offer.

It is with especial excitement that I look forward to the groundbreaking of South King County’s new Emergency Services Tower, later this summer. That will be a very important day for me and for our community, whose support has made VMC the standard for regional healthcare excellence.”

Rich Roodman, CEO
Public Hospital District No. 1