



Pointe Coupee General Hospital's 50th Anniversary Celebration Transcript

Thursday, November 7, 2019

Chad Olinde, Executive Officer

I'm Chad Olinde, executive officer at Pointe Coupee General Hospital. Thanks to everybody for coming out to celebrate with us today. Today we celebrate 50 years of providing health care service to the Pointe Coupee community.

In November of 1969, the Sisters of St. Joseph opened our hospital and began seeing patients. That initial hospital was built with Hill-Burton funds. Those were federal funds provided with one condition: we would continue to see low-income patients and treat those patients for many years. We finished that requirement in 1990, but the hospital has continued that mission over many years. The board decided they never wanted to stop doing that. That is part of our mission and will always be our mission.

Over the last 50 years, we've continued to grow and adapt to meet the needs of our community. We have a number of speakers today and people I want to recognize, but before we get started with that, I wanted to give a history of the hospital and even going back before this hospital was built to let everybody know just how this place came to be.

In 1952, the Sisters of St. Joseph managed the Mosely Clinic on a trial basis in downtown New Roads. In '53, the Sisters purchased the Mosely Clinic and changed the name to the Sisters of St. Joseph Hospital. The Sisters of St. Joseph hospital was approved as a 26-bed hospital. For the next fifteen years, hospital services were provided at that facility. In '69, Pointe Coupee General Hospital, a 60-bed hospital building, was completed on False River Drive and managed by the Sisters of St. Joseph. In '75, Pointe Coupee Health Unit was opened. In '77, the South Complex Physician suites were completed. In '83, the North Complex Physician suites were completed. In '84, Pointe Coupee Homebound Health was established. In '85,



expansion of the emergency department and the ICU was completed. In '85, the substance abuse, Bonne Santé, was completed. Pointe Coupee Council on Aging was relocated to the hospital's campus in 1985. In '87, management agreement with Our Lady of the Lake was established and that continued on until 2001.

In response to deteriorating financial conditions of 1987, the parish approved a half-cent sales tax. Ten years later in 1997, our board decided that that was too much and they actually asked the parish for a reduction from one-half cent to one-quarter cent – possibly the only public body that asked for a reduction in taxes. I don't know what we were thinking.

In '97, the therapy building and the home health building were completed on Hospital Road. In '98, the internal medicine building was completed. In 2004, the hospital was granted "Critical Access" status which provided for increased Medicare reimbursement. In 2015, Pointe Coupee General Hospital received accreditation by the Joint Commission on accreditation of healthcare organizations. In 2015, our lab department and the central supply store room was relocated to the newly completed 7,000 square foot building. In 2015, St. Joseph's Medical Plaza was completed – another 1,000 square foot complex is leased by Our Lady of the Lake's physicians. In 2017, the emergency department renovations to increase our capacity from 8 to 14 beds along with a new outpatient registration was completed. On this year, we completed enlarging many of our patient rooms to create a better patient experience.

Our board, our 9-member board, has provided a big part of our leadership over those years. I want to recognize those board members today; I see many of them are here. Frank Foti, Mary Grezaffi, William Vercher, Anthony Hurst, John Pourciau, my secretary Stephen Smith, our Vice Chairman Maurice Picard, our Finance Chair Donald Doucet, and our board chairman has served in that capacity since 2006. His leadership has proven invaluable to the progress we've made over the past fourteen years. He's a Lake physician that's served our community for many years. Doctor McLemore is going to



speak to us today, but he's still seeing his – oh, there he is! I want to introduce Dr. Carl McLemore, our board chairman.

Dr. Carl McLemore, Chairman

We have a nice turnout! Let's see, so we've been here 50 years in the building, but you know the hospital is not just about a building. It's about other people that make it possible, everyone in the community that supports it, all the staff that work here and make it work like it does. I don't know if I'll be here for 50 more years next time, but the hospital will, the community will, and as we go along things change and I think we've done a decent job about changing with the times and hopefully we can continue that.

Chad Olinde, Executive Officer

Next, I'd like to call up our past state representative and our first parish president, Major Thibaut.

Major Thibaut, Parish President

Thank you, Chad. I guess good afternoon. Doc kind of hit it on the head. I mean, I know when I was in the legislature representing you for 11 years, all we heard about was funding for hospital, particularly our rural hospitals. The tumultuous political environment that we're in and funding for healthcare; it's not many places that have access to rural healthcare facilities and in light of all the challenges that they've had with federal to state funding, this hospital over the last 50 years has survived, it's a pillar of our community. It's not only survived, but it's thrived. Continued to add programs, continued to add buildings and people, and I think, like Doc said, that's because of you. The people who work here now, as well as in the past, as well as your leadership, as well as the community that utilizes this facility.

We're glad to have you. I can tell you in a rural parish, this is one of the largest employers for the parish. So, it's a strong economic base for our parish and it's good to have a lot of the people that live here be able to work here. You want to continue that



and support it. So, happy birthday on the 50th year. Congratulations to each and every one of you and I hope I'm still around in 50 years. Thank you.

Chad Olinde, Executive Officer

Thank you, Major. We've always had a good relationship with our policy jury in the past. Many of the policy jury members were also our board members. Now it's a different form of government that we look forward to working with Major and the new parish government. They're a good group and it's always been a close relationship. Some of the hospital administrators I've talked to don't have quite the cohesiveness that we have in Pointe Coupee, so we are proud of that.

Next, I would like to call up our state representative, Jeremy Lacombe. Jeremy has been instrumental for many years in raising funds for cancer patients in the Lacombe Foundation. The proceeds from the softball tournament and cochon de lait have provided much needed help to those suffering with cancer. The funds raised have become an integral part of our foundation. State representative, Jeremy Lacombe.

Jeremy Lacombe, State Representative

Thank you, Chad. Distinguished guests. I'll say a few more words than Doc did. I guess it's part of why you never put a microphone in front of a lawyer and expect them not to talk.

That was a wonderful, chronological history that Chad provided about the hospital. One of the things that stuck out to me more than anything is that the basis of the hospital was essentially started to help provide indigent care to people in the rural community and even though that that official mission, as he said, ended, I think, in 1990 it's never really ended. And from that, I'd have to say, from our family's perspective, I stand before you as a state representative, but also I've only been elected for 6 months — the past 19 years our family has worked in close cohesiveness with the chair, the board, and the hospital through our work with the Janell LaCombe Cancer Fund.



What many don't know about Janell LaCombe Cancer Fund is that it's actually called the Pointe Coupee Health Services Foundation, and the Pointe Coupee Health Services Foundation encompasses more than just a cancer fund portion that's named after my mom. It also encompasses and captured hospice care and some of the other things that goes into it.

In 1999 my mother passed away from cancer and our family started this fundraising endeavor, but in doing so for about the first 10 years that it was in place we donated the money to Pointe Coupee Homebound Health — before it was even known as Pointe Coupee Homebound Health and Hospice, it was just Pointe Coupee Home Health and Hospice — and we did that because that organization which falls under this umbrella, the hospital, services, through home health services, mostly to patients in Pointe Coupee Parish, but they are expanded beyond Pointe Coupee, but certainly in our region.

Through that relationship they used the money and we developed over time a closer cohesiveness. From that arose through the leadership of past presidents of the home health and hospice organizations they saw a need that there was more to what we needed to do to provide than what was actually coming in. So, they approached the board and I think the people here need to understand how amazing that is and how they're dedicated, not only Chad, but the board itself, how dedicated they are in providing health services here.

We approached the board and the board agreed to incorporate and put the Health Services Foundation together. They allowed for it to be a 501(c)(3) and I know that a lot of people here have been through the beginning and helped us with the cancer stuff, but they have seen over the last 10 years the amount of money we've raised grow tremendously and that's not anything that we would do any different. Obviously, it got a little bit bigger over time, but it helped because it incorporated a 501(c)(3)-status into it



— allowed businesses and other entities to support our organization and reap the benefits.

I will tell you we donated \$64,500 from our softball tournament a few weeks ago to Homebound Health and Hospice. Last year we donated \$52,000. As you go through the course of time, it's been over \$675,000 donated. Over 500 families have reaped the benefits, but it's more than just the 500 families.

I'll tell a short story about what Chad and them did for us: 7 or 8 years ago we lost funding. We used to get a grant from Susan Komen for breast cancer screenings and those screenings were dedicated solely to providing mammograms for indigent women here in this parish who couldn't get that access to care — didn't have insurance. The Komen grant hit us hard because it was approximately \$20,000 a year they used to give us strictly for these screens and for a small organization we can't just make that up. That's several hundred mammograms a year.

We went to Chad and I said, "Chad, we can't lose this. So many of these women have been doing this for year after year after year and they need this mammogram. This is their only access to care." And Chad told me, he said, "Don't worry about it. We are going to figure it out. We are going to make it work." That's visionary leadership from a stand point — he could have said, "Bottom line, no. Look, we just don't have it in our budget. We're not going to do it."

He knew how instrumental it was and that was not only his decision, but it was the board's decision. Working with this board has been the easiest thing that we have done for our family than anything. It's because they still at this point service their original mission to provide health care and health services to indigent people in our community.

Whether or not that's a part of their official mission, it's certainly what they do every time I walk in this building and I go sit down with either Chad, or John, or Ms. Jeanine, or any of the other parties that are running this organization.



We have a unique opportunity right now in the state of Louisiana. There's a huge debate going on right now with our governor's election in 2 weeks. What are we going to do and how are we going to continue? Medicaid expansion is front and center in there. I will sit here and stand before you today and tell you that Medicaid expansion, that was expanded 4 years ago in this state, has helped this hospital. It's not been the end all, be all, but it has helped this hospital because it has given us federal tax dollars back to the state of Louisiana to help indigents — working people actually — help working families, get access to care. This hospital provides that care.

This is a major economic driver of our parish, it's one of the biggest employers we have, but more importantly when somebody in Batchelor has a stroke they're going to die if they have to be transported to Baton Rouge. They can be brought here and saved. If somebody is here in New Roads and they have a heart attack, they can get here. If they're in Fordoche, they can get here. If they're closer to Simmesport, they can get here. They're not going to get to Lafayette, they're not going to get to Baton Rouge, they're not going to get to New Orleans.

We have to fight to make sure that this hospital is financially viable going forward for another 50 years. It's too critical to our infrastructure and our parish not to. When you're voting for governor next 2 weeks from now, 3 weeks from now, you need to look at that. You need to look at those decisions and say what are we doing to healthcare in the state? What's happening? I think, that standing before you now, we have one opportunity to make sure that this hospital is viable and moving forward.

I thank everyone here from the bottom of our hearts. Our family has worked as teammates together with this organization, with this board, with this CEO, and with everyone at Home Health and Hospice. We've worked very hard over the last 2 decades to make sure people in this parish are taken care of and moving forward I have all the trust in the world in these folks — one of the most knowledgeable, most caring,



and most dedicate people to the patients that walk through this door, but also to the community that they serve.

Thank y'all, Chad, for everything that y'all do here and it's wonderful. We look forward to celebrating hopefully another 50 years with y'all.

Chad Olinde, Executive Officer

Every time I go to meetings at Louisiana Hospital Association, they're really big on Jeremy. They always ask about Jeremy and the great job he's doing in legislature. I guess they ask about Major a little bit, but they really ask about Jeremy a lot, you know, not sure what he's doing.

Jeremy mentioned that the mammography — we installed a new 3D mammo unit. Anybody interested in taking a tour of that, Tess Jarreau is available to give a tour after we finish; there she is back there. We do have patients scheduled at 1 o'clock, so you'll have to go as soon as we wrap things up. After that, you'll lose your chance. That's something we're very proud of.

Although we are celebrating this building today, 50 years, everybody knows the real thing that makes this hospital such a great place is all of the employees. Every time we have quality scores, we are compared to other rural hospitals nationally, we always score in the top third. That's not because of the building or equipment, it's all because of the compassion of the employees. We're very proud of the employees we have here.

Our turn over rate is probably half what the national average is for other hospitals and that tells us employees really just like working here. They come here and don't really move on to other hospitals. We're very proud of that.

Today we want to recognize those employees that have been here over 25 years. I'm going to call them up and they can just come — Lisa is going to give them some plaques.



Janice David, 25 years. Gladys Wright, who is 25 years. I am 25 years. Geraldine Dorsey, 26. Paula Guidroz, 26 years. Roxane Jewell, 27 years. Linda David, who is 30 years. Yvette Garrett is 30 years. Dania Tolliver, 30 years. Wanda Demoulin is 33 years. Gail Anderson is 36 years.

We have one employee that has made over 40 years. She came in 1979. She works in the Business Office as a biller, Sandra Pourciau. We estimate over 40 years of billing claims that Sandra has probably billed \$300 to \$400 million dollars for Medicare and Medicaid [inaudible]. I challenge anybody to find a biller in this state that knows more about Medicare and Medicaid billing than Sandra. Congratulations Sandra.

I want to recognize a past employee here, you've heard me mention the Sister's of St. Joseph many times. We have today here Sister Mary Anne Hebert. She was here in 1976 to 1978. She was an administrative assistant; she reported to the administrator or CEO. That's two years — I think she told me before that she went through 7 administrators. So, I'm not sure what was happening back there, but 7 administrators in 2 years — I'm glad that turn over is not quite like that right now. We're glad you came here today, Sister Hebert.

This concludes our celebration. We have a reception in the Sisters of St. Joseph Conference Room. Right inside the lobby we have many newsletters, scrapbooks, old medical equipment — you might recognize some of the people in all those old newsletters that you knew 40-50 years ago. Thanks everybody for coming out. We appreciate you coming.