

by Richard Craft, Supervisor, Town of Wawarsing

SAVE OUR HOSPITAL

It can truthfully be said that the heart of any community is its hospital (that is, if fortunate enough to have one.) It is the vortex of life and death, and the meeting place for both, as populations experience all kinds of changes. The presence of a hospital is of vital importance to the growth and economy of our region.

Without a hospital our present industrial base would be at a serious disadvantage. Those firms planning on locating here would also think twice about choosing a site where the nearest emergency room could be twenty-five miles away. Loss of life or limb from industrial accidents could be the result of delayed care.

Those visiting our area as tourists and falling victim to serious injury or illness would be in grave danger if they had to travel long distances for emergency and stabilizing care. The same holds true for residents within a 25-mile radius needing short or long-term care, including emergency surgery. For us to maintain our vitality as a community that cares, we must keep our hospital at all costs.

It is with a great sense of pride that I acknowledge the generosity of our residents who have supported the hospital in the past. We are not a rich community, but when the call came that our hospital needed an immediate infusion of \$1 million, the entire community sprang into action. A committee of community leaders, under the chairmanship of Bill Collier Sr., began its canvass of our town and the goal was reached to the pleasure of all.

What followed was a time when our hospital literally hit a stone wall and was placed in ICU. Each day was touch-and-go as rumors flew, personnel changed, and much maneuvering took place behind closed doors. Fortunately, those who had a vision for the continuance of the hospital stood firm in the face of some unpleasantness, but they won the day. Words will never adequately express the community's thanks to the Resnick family, Congressman Hinchey, Senator Bonacic, Assemblyman Mills, and the town's grant writer, Mark Blauer. They and the hospital board, chaired by Ron Elias, labored tirelessly to keep the patient alive through the crisis.

Where are we today? I can report to you that the patient is out of intensive care and is recovering. We expect complete recovery, but it will take some time for the healing process to achieve its goal. In spite of some shaky moments, plans are proceeding to add new life. Additional grant funds have been secured to add on to the


Family Practice Center so that additional specialties can be on site. A \$1 million loan has been secured through the Catskill Watershed Corporation, thanks in part to local legislator Ed Jennings, which will enable the hospital to upgrade its operating rooms and add on a new emergency room.

Once again it is people in high places who want to see a successful hospital. In this capacity, the hospital has just received certification as a Critical Access Hospital, making it eligible for greater reimbursement. I would be remiss if I failed to thank Community Development Block Grant (formerly HUD) Commissioner King and his able assistant Steve McGrattan for their assistance during this critical time.

Time has come to move ahead. For the good of the entire community we must try and forget some of the unpleasantness of the past. The Ellenville Hospital's continued existence is of primary importance to each of us and its presence is bigger than all of us. If I should get a heart attack I want transport immediately to the Ellenville Hospital. It may be my only hope.

Let's all rally around our hospital. It has saved thousands of lives throughout its history and hopefully will continue this service for a long time to come. The only thing lacking now is increased public utilization. Right now the *Ellenville Regional Hospital* needs all the friends it can get. I hope you are one of them?

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