



Your Health, Your Hospital

Vote YES on the Montezuma County Hospital District Mill Levy and Debrucing Referendums

On May 4, 2010, the **Montezuma County Hospital District** will request that voters approve a mill levy increase. We know that in today's tough economy, this is a lot to ask of taxpayers. We also know that an increase is essential and that, when passed, it will greatly benefit the citizens of Montezuma County by ensuring access to high-quality medical care for years to come.

Why are These Referendums Important? How Will a YES Vote Benefit You and Your Family?

Southwest Memorial Hospital (SWMH) conducted a community survey in late 2008. The people of Montezuma County spoke, and we listened. You said you needed better access to primary care physicians (especially those who accept Medicare and Medicaid) and that you wanted "walk in" or "urgent care" services. We would like to deliver on both of these requests – as well as continue to enhance other medical services – and we need your support. The additional funding that will flow into the hospital district (and ultimately to the hospital) as a result of a mill levy increase will allow us to do the following:

Double the size of our primary care clinic. We currently have three physicians and two nurse practitioners seeing patients in a space on Elm Street that is far too small for them to take care of everyone who would like to be seen. We plan to construct a new building on the hospital campus that will allow us to double the number of healthcare practitioners available to care for Medicare and Medicaid patients, as well as individuals with private or no insurance.

Make urgent care services available. When patients become ill or injured after their doctor has left his or her office for the day, a decision must be made – wait until the next day to seek care, or pay a visit to the emergency room. We plan to make that decision easier by offering urgent care services on the hospital campus. The availability of "walk in" care for minor illnesses and injuries will save patients money by reducing visits to the emergency room.

Recruit specialists. SWMH is actively recruiting a full-time obstetrician/gynecologist and several hospitalists. We also plan to develop "time share" office space where visiting specialty physicians (most likely traveling from Durango or Farmington) can see patients, for example, one-half or one day each week. The hospital has attempted to recruit visiting specialists in the past, but it has been difficult due to lack of office space. We envision initially recruiting visiting physicians in the following specialties: cardiology, urology, oncology, and dermatology. Having doctors available in Cortez who offer specialty services will reduce the need for local patients to drive long distances for certain types of care.

Upgrade patient rooms at SWMH. We have already begun refurbishing patient rooms on the second floor of the hospital and need to continue this process. Making all of our rooms private and comfortable for patients and visiting family members is a high priority.

Why Else is This Important?

To bolster our local economy. A quality hospital is one cornerstone in a thriving, vital community. Healthcare is a stable part of any economy. Southwest Health System, Inc. (SWMH and affiliated clinics) employs more than 340 individuals. The wages paid to our employees circulate in the community, stimulating our local economy. As we continue to expand our services to better meet the needs of the community, we will be able to hire additional qualified staff. One recent example of this is our new Diagnostic Sleep Center which has served hundreds of patients since opening in late 2009 and employs three full-time staff.

Retaining the excellent physicians we have in the area and recruiting additional doctors will not only improve access to healthcare, it will also help stimulate the local economy. An Oklahoma State University study conducted in 2007 revealed that for every new physician who moves to a rural community, 23 jobs are created.

In addition, local employers such as the City of Cortez, Montezuma County, the school district, and many others are supported in their own recruitment efforts when they are able to point to the fact that Montezuma County boasts a high-quality hospital and an ample number of outstanding physicians.

To have more access to grant funding. Mill levy revenue, as approved by local voters, is a key indicator of how much community support the hospital receives. Granting agencies such as DOLA (Department of Local Affairs) and Colorado Health Foundation are more inclined to award money for specific projects and new equipment if the hospital can demonstrate that it is well-supported locally.

To keep pace with advances in technology and nationwide standards in healthcare. Hospitals are dynamic institutions. As technology changes, we must keep up with current standards of care by continually upgrading and adding diagnostic equipment, surgical instruments, and computer technology. We believe in careful resource management, and we thoroughly evaluate all of our expenses and major purchases to ensure that we are spending in ways that will benefit the patients who entrust us with their care.

Why Voting YES on Debrucing is Important

For our efforts to be effective, we need a **YES** vote on **both** the mill levy increase **and** the question to “debruce,” a step that has already been taken in Montezuma County by the school and other special districts.

Debrucing is named after Douglas Bruce, the author of TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights) which went into effect in Colorado in 1993. When districts, in this case your local hospital district, “debruce,” it means that your tax dollars are managed locally. Without debrucing, the State dictates how your tax dollars are distributed here in Montezuma County. Vote **YES** to debruce if you prefer local control.

The Impact on Property Owners

Of the 31 counties in Colorado that have district hospitals, Montezuma County has the second lowest mill levy. Currently, our mill is **.761**. We are requesting that voters approve an increase to **3.5**, which will put us right at the state average. What does this increase mean to the typical property owner?

Residential Property Value	Annual Tax (District Portion) at Current Mill of .761	Total Annual Tax (District Portion) at Proposed Mill of 3.5
\$100,000	\$6.06	\$27.86
\$150,000	\$9.08	\$41.79
\$250,000	\$15.14	\$69.65
\$350,000	\$21.20	\$97.51

The hospital district’s mill levy has not been raised since the district was established in 1975. We know that voters will see the value of paying a little more each year in exchange for the confidence and peace of mind that comes with knowing they have access to the best medical care possible. Think about it this way: If your property is valued at \$100,000, your tax will increase by \$22 per year. Is that small amount worth supporting your hospital to add the medical services requested in the community survey? We think so, and we hope you agree and will vote **YES** for the mill levy increase **and** debrucing referendums on May 4.

Vote YES on May 4 for the Mill Levy and Debrucing Referendums

Need more information? We’re here to answer your questions.

<p>Trudy Chittick, PhD, FACHE Chief Executive Officer Southwest Health System, Inc. 970-564-2146</p>	<p>Fred DeWitt Board Member Montezuma County Hospital District 970-799-1383</p>
--	---