

# HOSPITALS - DOMINICAN Hospital Party, protest mark Dominican's 50th birthday

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SANTA CRUZ — The 50th birthday celebration of Dominican Hospital was marked Saturday with balloons and music, clowns and carnival games, a giant birthday cake, and a small protest demonstration.

Early attendance was light at the event, set for 11-4 p.m., but it was expected to draw some 2,000 people over the course of the day.

The festivities were celebrated at both of the hospital's facilities, on Soquel Drive and the former Community Hospital on Frederick Street.

At the Soquel Drive location, families turned out to munch free popcorn and sip soft drinks while playing carnival games and listening to bluegrass and mariachi music.

Clowns circulated through the crowd, twisting balloons into dogs, giraffes and crowns. A magician strolled through, exhibiting his sleight-of-hand tricks.

Four purple-clad Dancing California Raisins performed on stage as well, and then mingled with the crowd, offering four-fingered high-fives and dancing with the willing.

Delighting some children was an oversized costumed dinosaur, while other kids, more timid, preferred to admire his long green tail from a safe distance, say, in dad's arms.

Tours of the hospital and a historical exhibit were also featured.

Free carnival games were staffed by Dominican employees and volunteers. Clad in turquoise shirts, they were friendly carnies, glad to give out the secrets to the games.

In a class of its own was the birthday cake. Hospital volunteer and master cake maker Donna Blankinship topped 20 sheet carrot cakes with replicas of the three buildings the hospital has occupied over its 50 year history.

Dominican Hospital first came to the city in 1941. It was started by the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Mich., who were

asked to come here by the Bishop of the Monterey/Fresno Diocese of the Catholic Church.

The sisters bought Hanly Hospital on West Cliff Drive and renamed it Sisters Hospital.

In 1949, they added a larger, 49-bed Santa Cruz Hospital on Soquel Avenue, renaming it Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital.

By the 1960s, the need was evident for a larger, more modern hospital. The two smaller facilities were closed and the present hospital on Soquel Drive opened in 1967, with 150 beds. The hospital continued to grow through the next two decades, adding services, buildings and new medical technologies.

It was among the first hospitals in the state to offer CAT scanning, laser surgery and endoscopy.

In 1990, the hospital bought out its nearby rival, Community Hospital on Frederick Street. That brought the hospital's total capacity to 385 beds.

One effect of the Community Hospital buyout has been a running controversy over Dominican's refusal to perform tubal ligations, a form of sterilization the Catholic hospital will not do, on religious grounds.

At Saturday's festivities, a group of two dozen protesters held up a sign at the entrance to the hospital highlighting Dominican's continued refusal to perform tubal ligations.

"We just want to keep the issue alive," said Sarah Silverman, a member of the Reproductive Rights Network, a coalition of more than 30 local groups that organized the protest. "It's been 18 months since the buyout. There's a number of people who actually thought this was settled."

Community members have pressed the hospital to resume the surgery, saying its lack is a hardship to north county residents.

The operation is available to private patients at the Santa Cruz Medical Clinic.

The clinic's application for Medi-Cal certification to perform the operation has hit a few snags, said Betsy McCarty of the county's Health Services Agency, but approval is expected in about a month.

Tubal ligation is available to both private and Medi-Cal residents of South County, at Watsonville Community Hospital.

Silverman emphasized the protest was not anti-Dominican Hospital.

"We appreciate all the services they perform," she said. "But in absorbing the other major medical provider in the county, it set Dominican in the position of being the sole major medical provider in the north county."

Silverman said that most tubal ligations are done immediately after childbirth.

"Asking a woman from Boulder Creek to give birth at Watsonville is not viable," she said.