

Hospitals - Watsonville Hospital

# Hospital grand opening set for Sunday

## Event features speeches, fireworks, bands, and tours

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WATSONVILLE — Nearly nine years after the Loma Prieta earthquake damaged Watsonville Hospital's facility at Green Valley Road, officials from every level of government will visit Watsonville Sunday

afternoon to help community members celebrate the opening of the health care provider's new campus.

The grand opening, scheduled from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at 75 Nielson St., will feature speeches, a ribbon cutting ceremony, musical entertainment, a flag raising ceremony,

fireworks, and tours of the new hospital. The celebration will begin with the arrival of a gurney, which emergency room physicians and nurses will push two miles from the old hospital site to the new one.

"We expect to have a big turnout from the community," said hospital spokeswoman Kathleen King. "We think there will be a significant number of people of who will be very interested in seeing their new hospital. We tried to arrange to develop a range of activities everyone

would enjoy and we hope people will come and have a wonderful time."

Highlighting the ceremonies from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. will be remarks by Congressman Sam Farr, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Director Michael Hirsch, retired State Senator Henry Mello, State Senator Bruce McPherson, State Assemblyman Peter Frusetta, Santa Cruz County Supervisor Ray Belgard, and Watsonville Mayor Dennis Osmer.

WRP 4.18.98  
Hospital officials, including Board Chair Betsy Woolpert, Chief of Medical Staff Stan Hajduk, and President and CEO John Friel will also speak, along with Santa Cruz County Health Officer and Medical Director George Wolfe.

"This is truly a historic event not only because it occurs as we begin our second century of service to area residents, but also because this dream represents a triumph over

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disaster for our community," said Friel in a prepared statement.

After officials determined in 1990 that the ground floor of the facility at 298 Green Valley Road had been severely damaged by the earthquake, the hospital qualified for a grant from FEMA and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. By adding money from other sources, hospital officials were able to complete the \$73 million replacement project.

Accompanying the festivities will be music provided by the Watsonville Band and a mariachi band. Troop 558 of the Boy Scouts of America will conduct a flag raising ceremony, and Fireworks America will offer a 30-second pyrotechnic display. Self-guided tours of the new facility, designed by ADP Marshall Architects, and built by Turner Construction and a variety of subcontractors, begin at about 3 p.m.

"People should come a little early because they may have to walk a bit from where they park to the building," said King.

The open house celebration is free and open to the public. Although the grand opening celebration takes place Sunday, the new hospital will not be open to the public for business until April 26, when the hospital's patients will be moved.

On April 26, the new hospital's emergency room will open for business at 6 a.m. Emergency room services will continue at the old facility until noon April 26.