## Watch out for wet cement



Jessica Nelms/Staff

**Crews smooth concrete** for new sidewalks in downtown Seneca on Tuesday afternoon.

# New Life Center hopes to become surgical destination

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SENECA — Meetings are continuing weekly toward the establishment of a new specialty unit at Oconee Medical Center.

Working in concert with Blue Ridge Orthopaedics of Seneca and Marshall Steele Associates of Chicago, OMC will soon open the New Life Center for Joint Health, a wellness center devoted to knee and hip replacement surgery and rehabilitation.

"We have long been a destination for sports medicine, and it is exciting that we are about to become a destination for joint replacement," said Dr. Larry S. Bowman of the Blue Ridge group.

Bowman went on to say that the New Life Center will offer an exciting holistic approach to the process of joint replacement that will improve the quality of care from admission to the completion of rehabilitation. The process that will be used is one developed by a leading Maryland-based orthopedic surgeon, who has essentially reinvented the process of joint replacement.

According to registered nurse K.C. Rawlings, who has been involved in the planning and will work exclusively in the Center, patients will actually come in groups, have their surgeries at the same time and then convalesce and rehabilitate together.

An entirely new area will be reserved on the fourth floor of the 155-bed patient tower opening in June. Eventually, however, the New Life Center will be permanently located on the second floor of the current hospital. The new Center will open July 27. By that time, remodeling of the second floor in the current building will have begun. Fourteen private rooms will be established, a gymnasium will be built, and dining facilities will be provided, as well as amenities for family members and friends.

The facilities that will be developed will take into consideration the fact that family members may want to stay overnight, will need to have a place to eat and will want coffee, snacks and other amenities not always associated with a hospital.

"It will be state-of-the-art in functionality and have eye appeal to boot," Bowman said, adding that the facility will be marketed throughout northeast Georgia and the Upstate and Midlands of South Carolina. "There will be no other centers like ours."

The goal is to double, within two years, the 250 replacement procedures currently being done annually at OMC.