

Oconee Medical Center's new Breast Care Center open

SENECA – Oconee Medical Center's new Breast Care Center has opened making digital mammography available for the first time at the facility.

Members of the staff, hospital administrators, physicians and visitors celebrated with a ribbon cutting at the new center and an open house for the public is scheduled from 3:30 to 6 p.m., Sept. 20.

Winning the Siemen's MAMMOMAT Inspiration digital mammography system earlier this year was a springboard for Oconee Medical Center's development of the Breast Care Center which is located within the hospital building adjacent to the radiology department.

The center offers not only digital mammography, but also breast ultrasound and stereotactic breast biopsies in one location – a dedicated space for breast health that promotes privacy, comfort and attention to individual patient needs. Improved processes help to expedite results to the patient. Diagnosis can be confirmed, in most cases,

within a few days allowing patients to move on to the most important phase of the process – healing.

"We realized that we may not have another opportunity like this," said Brad Tyler, MD, general surgeon and breast care center medical director. "Winning this digital mammography system opened the door for us to enhance the excellent service that we were already providing and allows us to focus on the patient even more."

Before finalizing plans to move all breast health services back to the hospital from the Outpatient Diagnostic Center, Oconee Medical Center conducted a series of focus groups with women in the community to get their input on what a truly comprehensive, patient-friendly breast center would look and feel like. The input from these focus groups helped to direct the hospital's leadership in developing the breast care center.

The plan involved a three-phase renovation to existing space in the radi-

ology department to make way for an area that would be completely dedicated to breast care. As phases one and two neared completion, the hospital conducted another set of focus groups with women who have experienced breast cancer either personally or with a loved one. Some of the women had been cancer-free for years, others were still in treatment, and some represented loved ones who had not survived.

"These women reinforced why we do what we do," said Nate Farrar, director of radiology and cardiology services at Oconee Medical Center. "There are so many women in our community who have been dealt the blow of a breast cancer diagnosis. Each of them has a unique story to tell, but they all have very similar needs," continued Farrar.

These discussions guided the development of a breast care center that is now philosophically more about the whole patient than it is about simply providing a diagnosis, good service and a nice

location.

"We found that those needs went well beyond what we can do for them diagnostically, surgically, or with an attractive new space," said Jennifer (J.J.) Thomas, lead mammography technologist. "A breast cancer diagnosis is a very

emotional experience that presents unique challenges. The breast care center concept embraces that aspect of our relationship with our patients. It will be an ongoing, evolving process, but we're very excited about being able to give our patients more of

the personal attention they deserve."

Oconee Medical Center's annual free clinical breast exams from 6 to 8 p.m., Sept. 27. Appointments are required. Call the Wellness Center at (864) 885-7654 to schedule a breast exam appointment.



FOR THE JOURNAL

Pictured, left to right, are Oconee Medical Center President and CEO, Jeanne L. Ward; Lorraine Harding, Oconee Medical Center Foundation board member; Lane Lynch, breast cancer survivor; Brad Tyler, MD, surgeon; J.J. Thomas, lead mammography technologist; Blake Poleynd, MD, radiologist; Bonnie Anderson, MD, radiologist; and Nate Farrar, director of radiology and cardiology services.