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Catholic Healthcare West discusses expansion projects

By Ed Gately
Tribune

New hospitals in Queen Creek and Casa Grande are among Catholic Healthcare West's aggressive expansion plans across the south East Valley. Chandler Regional Hospital, one of Catholic Healthcare West's two East Valley hospitals, is near the top of "The Chandler 100," a list of that city's largest employers.

During a forum Wednesday for the list's release, David Covert, president and CEO of Chandler Regional Hospital, discussed the parent company's upcoming expansion projects.

Chandler Regional Hospital, at Dobson and Frye roads, is running near capacity, and plans are under way to build a five-story addition with 100 patient beds and additional operating rooms to grow the hospital's cardiovascular service line, Covert said.

"We're looking to start the expansion in about a year and a half, so we're looking at about three years before we have the additional capacity there," he said.

Mercy Gilbert Medical Center, at Loop 202 and South Val Vista Drive, opened in June 2006 and has since experienced higher-than-expected patient volume, Covert said.

"We're in the midst of a 100-bed expansion at that location," he said. "In addition, we'll be adding a neurosurgery service line, as well as an orthopedic service line."

That expansion already is under way and should be completed by January, Covert said.

In Queen Creek, Catholic Healthcare West has purchased acreage at the corner of Riggs and Meridian roads, and plans to build a hospital there, he said.

"It will start as a fairly small hospital when we open it," Covert said.

"We'll have emergency room services, surgical services and some in-patient capacity, but we'll be looking to grow that location as the community grows."

In Pinal County, Catholic Healthcare West is looking at Casa Grande as a possible future hospital site, he said.

Construction in Queen Creek and Casa Grande is three to four years down the road, Covert said.

"As the community grows, we have a real need for women's services and for emergency room services," he said.

"Probably the biggest challenge out of all of this is hiring an adequate nursing staff. There's a nursing shortage throughout the United States and it's acute in particular in Arizona. Thus far, we haven't had any expansions put on hold because of the health care professionals, but that does stand out as the No. 1 challenge when we do open the

facilities."



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