

By KEN WOODLEY

FARMVILLE — Patient volume and quality of care have both increased since the 2006 affiliation with Centra Health, Centra Southside Community Hospital President and CEO, Dr. Gwen Eddleman, told Town Council last month.

"I think I have some good news to share with you," she told council members during a reconvened meeting in late December. Overall admissions have grown by almost 16 percent "and we're budgeting for an additional almost 7.5 percent in admissions for 2010."

Outpatient volumes, meanwhile, grew by 15 percent from 2006 to 2009, with further increases expected this year. Admissions to the emergency room have grown from just over 17,000 when Dr. Eddleman arrived in 2003 to just over 28,000 last year.

"That's a lot of growth in six years," she said.

The volume of patients using Centra SCH's imaging systems reflects an "even more dramatic increase—26.8 percent." More patients and the vast majority believe they have received good to very good care, according to Dr. Eddleman.

"Most patients—55 percent—think we're very good; 33 percent think we're good," Dr. Eddleman reported. "We need to move those into the 'very good' category but we're working on that."

The hospital, meanwhile, is outperforming the state and national average among hospitals in heart attack care and congestive heart failure care. "You can see that your local hospital is outperforming that state and the national (average)," she said.

"Positive outcomes for patients, this is really where the rubber hits the road," she said.

In terms of pneumonia patients "the race is a little closer but we're still doing very nicely...We're equal to our outscoring the state and the nation," Dr. Eddleman said.

Hip surgery and knee surgery replacement procedures?

"Again, even though the race is a little bit tighter, we are equal to or outperforming the state and the nation on those indicators," Dr. Eddleman told Town Council. And those patients are in private rooms which have now been renovated.

"All of our rooms are private rooms. At this point, your community hospital has nothing but private rooms. A lot of hospitals," Dr. Eddleman said, "would love to be in the position we are, with that kind of privacy for our patients."

And those being admitted through the emergency room are getting to their private room sooner.

"We have a new initiative to move our patients out of the emergency room more quickly. At this point from the time that the physician makes the decision to admit you to the hospital it is our objective that

we should have you upstairs and in a bed in 30 minutes," Dr. Eddleman said. "That's our expectation."
"Since we implemented this in August, we are meeting that expectation about 70 percent of the time and that's a tremendous improvement over times past," she said. "That's been a problem at every hospital I've ever worked in the last number of years."