



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Thompson Healthcare ranked Northeast Regional Medical Center as one of the nation's top hospitals in the category of community hospitals.

## Hospital ranks in top 100

**NMRC makes health care company's list for patient safety, financial stability**

BY DIANE POELKER  
Assistant News Editor

For some communities, having a nationally-recognized medical center might feed town pride, but recent honors have caused doubt and confusion for some Kirksville residents.

National health care provider Thompson Healthcare has named Northeast Regional Medical Center as one of the nation's Top 100 Hospitals for 2008. This year, NRMRC, Kirksville's local osteopathic hospital, made the list for the first time as one of 20 small community hospitals leading the industry in the areas of patient outcomes, patient safety, national treatment standards, efficiency and financial stability, according to Thompson's survey data.

"There is a higher level of service and commitment to patient care here," CEO of NRMRC Bob Moore said. "[The award] is based on statistics. We were awarded Top 100 hospital in the small community hospital category, which has 25 to 99 beds."

Moore said Thompson Healthcare creates its annual list based on MedPar data — Medicare statistics which can be compared across the country. He said that although he hopes the award will help build morale on staff and in the community, some Kirksville residents might be unsure about NRMRC's worthiness.

"When you have something like this,

you always have your skeptics in the community," Moore said. "A lot of people may not know what a top-notch hospital we have because they've never been anywhere else. ... We [also] still have about 40 percent of the community who choose to go elsewhere [for medical care]."

Moore said he recognizes many of the pros and cons of small hospitals. He said that in the case of NRMRC, staff often can offer a higher level of service and patient care. However, because of the location and population size, Moore said the variety of services might be limited.

"One of the problems we have is recruiting some of the specialists that we need to offer the range of services we want to," Moore said.

Sophomore nursing student Megan Burns said she understands her experiences in Truman's nursing program might be limited because of NRMRC's size. Burns said that although she has yet to start her clinicals as part of Truman's nursing program, she's had experience with NRMRC in the past, and the Thompson award surprises her.

"We had to shadow for our freshman year, and when I shadowed, I thought it was nice," Burns said. "I didn't see anything wrong with [Kirksville's hospital]. ... But I'm from around here, and everybody from my small town hates Kirksville's [hospital]. Any time they look for medical care it's like, 'Oh no, Kirksville's horrible.' They don't think the doctors are very good."

Pam Gardner, assistant professor of nursing, said she's seen both the posi-

tives and the negatives of working with NRMRC. She said Kirksville's small community is both a blessing and a curse for the hospital.

"It's a double-edged sword," Gardner said. "I think that sometimes you are an expert when you don't live where you work. ... I live in Putnam County, and when I leave Putnam County, I'm an expert. When I'm at home, and I'm in Putnam County, I'm Pam — they don't always look at me as being an expert in the [medical] field because they know me casually."

Gardner said that for some community residents, a local hospital represents comfort and safety, and they will continually return for care. However, for others, a smaller institution presents additional risks and questions because of a lack of specialty programs.

"If you looked at me and said, 'Do you want to have your heart cut open here or in St. Louis?' I'm going to St. Louis," Gardner said. "I think that's what the specialists [found]."

Gardner said NRMRC also faces the additional hurdles of institutional and community memory.

"I think probably too is just that the Midwest — the people that live here have long, long memories — they don't let you off the hook very easily," Gardner said. "Do hospitals make mistakes? Absolutely, yes they do. Does this one make more than St. John's [in St. Louis]? No, they don't. But it's smaller, they're more obvious, and the people around here don't darn-well forget it."

## Truman Aggies promote CAFO conversations

BY COREY JAROS  
for the Index

Truman's chapter of the Collegiate Farm Bureau sponsored a forum last Thursday at the SUB Down Under discussing the pros and cons of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations.

Senior Sheila Rustemeyer, a member of the Collegiate Farm Bureau, said one of the group's main reasons for hosting the event was to make sure the public had a chance to listen to both sides of the issue.

"A lot of the agricultural science students were present at the environmental studies forum that was held last fall in Pershing, and we were upset that they only discussed the cons of CAFOs," Rustemeyer said. "We felt like we should put something together that gave a more realistic view to help people to see both sides of the issue before deciding what they think of CAFOs. So we had two speakers representing each side of the industry."

Cassie Phillips, a graduate student

in environmental studies at Truman, paired up with John Ikert, an agriculture professor from the University of Missouri, to present the cons of CAFOs. The pro side of the issue was presented by two CAFO owners, Chris Chinn and Ralph Griesbaum.

Collegiate Farm Bureau member junior Cale Plowman opened the forum with a greeting and explanation of the format. Plowman was in charge of selecting and contacting the speakers for the forum and introduced each of the four speakers before they presented their arguments.

"I was very pleased with the speakers," Plowman said. "Some of them traveled a long way to get here. I was a little disappointed with the attendance, though. I was surprised that there were

only a handful of environmental science students, and we only had one agriculture professor there."

Phillips began the forum with an

**"CAFOs are a legitimate public health risk, and they generally displace two or three individual farmers for each one built."**

**John Ikert**  
University of Missouri  
Professor of Agriculture

explanation of the perceived cons of corporate farming, stressing the potential implications of putting the control of America's agriculture industry into the hands of a small number of farmers. She also cited several environmental and quality of life concerns, including an increase in livestock's antibiotic resistance, which ultimately can lead to human resistance to penicillin.

Ikert then presented his ideas about the cons of CAFOs, focusing on the need for small-town citizens to maintain a voice on the topic of allowing large-scale operations to be built within their communities.

"CAFOs are a legitimate public health risk, and they generally displace two or three individual farmers for each one built," Ikert said. "They quickly overtook the bottom one-third of the least efficient farmers, and once they gained a large share of the U.S. market, they began to undercut all but the specialized independent farmer. CAFO owners talk about providing jobs, establishing a tax base and lowering tax rates for residents, but that just does not happen in reality."

Chinn has owned a CAFO for more than five years with her husband in Marion County, Mo., and she spoke about the benefits of CAFOs. She said her animals are happier and healthier living in a controlled indoor climate rather than outside where they are prone to predators and inclement weather. Her farm is enrolled in a nutrient and organic matter recycling program, which uses waste and other byproducts to carefully replenish the land that they grow crops on.

"As a sixth-generation family

farmer, I know how the farming business works," Chinn said. "You have to have healthy animals if you want to be successful. Farmers are price-takers, not price-makers, so there is a lot of market uncertainty. So we have to be as efficient as possible to survive in the business."

Another argument on the pro side was that livestock are not the sole source of income for most small farm owners.

"A farmer cannot make a living on just a hobby farm without being very specialized," Rustemeyer said. "Most of the small farms that are owned today are just a part-time job or a hobby."

After both sides were finished, questions were collected from the audience, and the speakers were offered the opportunity to answer the question or respond to the opponent's position. The event was sponsored by the Truman State Aggies, and a variety of door prizes were raffled off following the conclusion of the forum.



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