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Conversations with Newsmakers: Carol S. Evans

Title: Director of Southeastern Heart Center

Age: 58

Home: Lumberton

In the news because: Southeastern Regional Medical Center broke ground Nov. 12 for an \$11 million heart-care center. Evans is director of the center, which will be run by Duke University Health System



Carol Evans began working with officials at Southeastern Regional Medical Center in October 2003 to plan for the new heart center. The center will offer open-heart surgical services for the first time in Robeson County.

The N.C. Division of Facility Services approved Southeastern's application for open-heart surgery and interventional cardiac catheterization services in December 2002. The center requires a 29,000-square-foot addition to house the program. The center will include two operating rooms and a pair of cardiac catheterization labs.

Duke will staff the program, including cardiothoracic surgeons. Southeastern Regional will provide support services.

Photo by James Locklear

Carol Evans, who comes to the area from Lubbock, Texas, where she helped design and run a \$66 million heart center, will run a new center in Robeson County that will offer open-heart surgery in the county for the first time.

The center will be built on the two-story Diagnostic and Treatment Center building on 27th Street, adjacent to the patient bed tower that opened in June 2002. Construction is expected to be completed at the end of 2005.

Evans previously designed a \$66 million heart center for Methodist Hospital in Lubbock, Texas, and directed it from 1992-1996.

Staff writer Venita Jenkins talked with Evans about Lumberton's heart center. Here are excerpts:

Q: Why did you decide to take the job as executive director of the heart center?

A: It was an opportunity to have the best of two worlds, working for a world-renowned academic center, Duke University Health System, and living in a community setting where neighbors care for neighbors, Southeastern Regional Medical Center.

Q: What has taken place over the past few months to prepare for the opening of the heart center?

A: SRMC, Duke and the community worked together for over five years to obtain the necessary Certificate of Need approval to bring open-heart services to this region. Following my recruitment in the fall of 2003, we created 14 committees dedicated to the development of the Southeastern Heart Center. These committees are made up of numerous Duke and SRMC physicians, administrative, nursing and ancillary staff. This ongoing process includes facility design, equipment selection, staff recruitment and training, and patient safety and quality improvement.

Q: Why is there such a need for a heart center in Robeson County?

A: As documented in the Certificate of Need application, Robeson County leads the state in morbidity and mortality from heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Heart disease, as a cause of death, is 36 percent higher in Robeson County than in the state as a whole.

Q: How will it benefit its residents?

A: We are proud to present a family friendly design which will provide open visitation. This will enable families to remain with their loved one throughout their stay in Southeastern Heart Center. No longer will patients and their families have to travel long distances for elective cardiovascular procedures.

Q: Do you feel the heart center will be successful?

A: With the overwhelming support of the SRMC board of trustees, SRMC Foundation board of

trustees, Duke and SRMC physicians, administrative, nursing, ancillary staff and the surrounding community, we are assured success.

Q: What is your vision for the heart center?

A: My vision is that Southeastern Heart Center and its partner, Duke, will provide the highest quality, state-of-the-art, family oriented cardiovascular program available. I am dedicated to the fight against heart disease. I promise that Southeastern Regional Medical Center and our partner, Duke University Health System, will deliver the highest quality heart care to the people of this region. Your heart deserves a great team.

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