



MARTIN O'NEIL CANCER CENTER ON SCHEDULE FOR

2009 OPENING

State-of-the-art center will offer the full spectrum of cancer treatment services

Watch us build the Cancer Center! See real-time web cam photos at www.sthelenahospital.org. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "Watch Our Cancer Center Construction."

When the Martin O'Neil Cancer Center opens at St. Helena Hospital this year, it will be staffed by top medical and radiological oncology physicians, surgeons and research staff and equipped with state-of-the-art technology—making it the region's most advanced center for cancer care.

"We are creating the most comprehensive cancer center in the North Bay," says St. Helena Hospital President and CEO JoAline Olson, noting that Napa County ranks 6th and Lake County ranks 3rd in the state for cancer incidence. "Area residents deserve access to the latest cancer treatments. With a comprehensive cancer center right here at home, patients will no longer have to travel long distances to receive the highest-quality care all in one location."

"The environment will be spa-like—very healing, soothing and nurturing," she adds. "We'll offer integrative health services, like massage therapy and yoga."

"The Cancer Center would not have been built without the enormous generosity from our community, whose members contributed the lion's share of the \$28 million the St. Helena Hospital Foundation raised in less than two years to support this project and many others on our campus."

Notably, the Martin O'Neil Cancer Center will be an affiliate site for clinical trials conducted by the Stanford University Cancer Center.

"This means residents of the North Bay will have access to the latest research studies for cancer treatment close to home," says Greg Smith, MD, medical director of the Martin O'Neil Cancer Center and a longtime oncologist at St. Helena Hospital. "Only 3 percent of patients in the United States are placed on clinical trials, and this is a shame because they are not being offered the best treatment available. Only through participation in clinical trials are we going to find cures for cancer."

The 12,500-square-foot center is on target to open this fall. It will occupy the top floor of a new \$30 million, 24,000-square-foot building that will also house the hospital's new Outpatient Surgery Pavilion.

"We expect to wrap up construction in July," says project manager Jay Barrington.

"We are through the most difficult part of the project, with 99 percent of the structural steel in place. The roof and internal walls started going up in December, and the first concrete walls of the linear accelerator were poured in October—this was a huge milestone." Barrington notes that as part of St. Helena Hospital's commitment to green building principles, 95 percent of the steel used is recycled.

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES The Martin O'Neil Cancer Center will offer the full spectrum of cancer treatment services, including:

- An eight-station chemotherapy suite
- Radiation oncology with a state-of-the-art Varian linear accelerator for radiation treatment
- A cancer resource library
- A patient restoration and therapy spa incorporating yoga, massage therapy, nutrition counseling and other therapies to address cancer patients' emotional and spiritual needs
- A retail boutique with products catering to patients
- A large, comfortable lobby that provides an area for patients, family and friends to gather, share experiences and support each other.

THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY The center will boast some of the latest, most sophisticated technology available for diagnosing and treating cancer, including intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), which shapes radiation beams to closely approximate the shape of a tumor. This allows an increased dose of radiation to be delivered directly to cancer cells with pinpoint accuracy while sparing more of the surrounding healthy tissue.

A recent \$500,000 grant will help the Martin O'Neil Cancer Center to purchase



the latest technology capable of delivering IMRT with image-guided radiation therapy technology, says Elaine John, president and CEO of the St. Helena Hospital Foundation.

“The Napa Valley Vintners, through Auction Napa Valley, have played a key role in keeping St. Helena Hospital state-of-the-art,” John says. “This grant award will help us acquire a new \$2.8 million Varian linear accelerator, allowing us to become a comprehensive, integrated cancer center to better serve our community.”

KEY STAFF MEMBERS A multimillion-dollar, state-of-the-art facility requires top administrative and medical staff to ensure delivery of first-class health care services.

The new executive director of the Martin O’Neil Cancer Center is Shari Bluband,



Shari Bluband,
Cancer Center
executive director

who will be responsible for the leadership of the center and day-to-day operations. Shari was the senior director of operations for the University of Minnesota Physicians

and Fairview Health Systems and was cancer center administrator at the University of Minnesota. She has the experience of starting three cancer centers and has been involved in every aspect, from design to startup and ongoing successful performance.

“Shari’s experience in comprehensive cancer centers, her expertise in leadership, her passion for excellence, and her embrace of our mission, vision and values makes us very excited to have her joining our team,” Olson says.

In addition to Dr. Smith, Pedro Ramirez, MD, has already joined the medical staff. He is a surgical oncologist with a subspecialty in treating pancreatic and biliary cancers. He completed a fellowship in advanced gastrointestinal oncology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Md. “His practice here greatly enhances our Cancer Center’s status as the region’s premier provider of services for cancer patients,” Olson says.

WHAT’S IN THE NAME The new Cancer Center is named for two local philanthropists, Stephen Martin and Dennis O’Neil, owners of Checkerboard Vineyards, who donated \$3 million to the project.

“We feel a deep commitment to the place we live and work,” O’Neil says. “Investing in St. Helena Hospital gives us a way to take our share of the responsibility for the health and vitality of the community.”

You can help

The Martin O’Neil Cancer Center and the Outpatient Surgery Pavilion is the first part of a five-phase master plan for St. Helena Hospital to rebuild its campus, expand services and add new technologies.

For information about how you can support the Cancer Center, funding for clinical trials, and other projects, please contact the St. Helena Hospital Foundation by calling 963-6208 or visiting www.shhfoundation.org.



Dr. Ramirez and his girlfriend, Celeste Neeley, backpacking the Grand Canyon.

Call of the wild and Cancer Center draw Dr. Ramirez west

It was the high mountains and a love for the outdoors that drew cancer surgeon Pedro Ramirez, MD, west.

“Over the years I’ve spent a lot of time in Colorado with my family, and so when it came time to look for a position, I decided to move from Baltimore (where he practiced at Johns Hopkins) to someplace where I could regularly have access to the outdoors,” Dr. Ramirez says. “The position at the Martin O’Neil Cancer Center opened, and I knew it was a good match—both for my surgical skills and experience as well as for the ability to pursue outdoor activities, in particular backpacking, in a truly beautiful part of the country.”

Dr. Ramirez is a recent convert to ultralight backpacking. Like cancer surgery, ultralight backpacking is a niche within a larger tradition that requires planning and precision. The goal is to be one with the pack, guiding its weight effortlessly through the wilderness. When it comes to packing, the lighter, the better. Devotees think in tenths of an ounce when selecting gear. Drilling holes in toothbrushes or cutting off their handles to eliminate weight is standard.

“I’m as enthusiastic when pursuing my hobbies as I am with my medical career,” he says. “Both offer challenges, satisfaction and the opportunity for growth.”