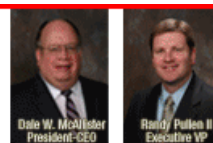




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Staff from Clarinda Regional Health Center, Mercy Medical Center-Des Moines and Air Methods/LifeNet show the air ambulance helicopter to the public Monday, Oct. 15, at Clarinda Regional Health Center. The air ambulance, housed in Clarinda, will transport patients to medical centers in Omaha, Lincoln, Des Moines, and St. Joseph, Mo. The helicopter will have the ability to service air ambulance calls in southwest Iowa and northwest Missouri. (Herald-Journal photo by John Van Nostrand)

Posted: Friday, October 19, 2012 10:00 am

By John Van Nostrand
Publisher | 0 comments

The Clarinda Regional Health Center has taken off in a literal way.

The hospital started a partnership with Mercy Medical Center-Des Moines and Air Methods/LifeNet Monday, Oct. 15, for an air ambulance base in Clarinda.

A fully staffed and equipped Bell 407 helicopter will be stationed either at the hospital helipad or at a maintenance hangar at Schenck Field-Clarinda Municipal Airport. The air ambulance is expected to serve an area within 40 to 50 miles of Clarinda, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"This advances our exceptional care," said Clarinda Regional Health Center CEO Chris Stipe. "We have a new facility, new MRI and now the helicopter. We won't rest."

The Clarinda Regional Health Center, which is affiliated with Mercy through an administrative services agreement, will provide the facilities to house the air ambulance service. Mercy will provide the 11 flight paramedics and nurses. Air Methods will provide four pilots and a mechanic.

Mercy One Program Manager, Dennis Cochran, said Mercy - Des Moines said the partnership will better serve the region.

"This will be our third flight program in the state of Iowa. Our Mercy One air ambulance program has been very successful in terms of fast response times in other locations, so we're excited to bring this level of service to southwest Iowa and northwest Missouri. We've put together a highly professional flight crew of nurses and medics. They can't wait to get in the air to start helping patients."

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While Southwest Iowa hospitals use air ambulance service, few have an on-site helipad.

The air ambulance will transport patients to medical centers in Omaha, Lincoln, Des Moines, and St. Joseph, Mo. The helicopter will have the ability to service air ambulance calls in southwest Iowa and northwest Missouri.

This will include a 15-county region surrounding Clarinda to include the Iowa hospital communities of Atlantic, Corning, Cres-ton, Mount Ayr, Red Oak, Shenandoah and Missouri hospital communities of Fairfax and Maryville. Outlying areas may also utilize this service for on-scene emergency calls.

Stipe thanked the health center's board of directors for its "progressive vision" for the future of health care in southwest Iowa.

"Their vision really positioned Clarinda Regional Health Center well for an opportunity like this," Stipe said. "Doctors Stanley and Stone encouraged this too."

The new facility that opened in January was equipped with a helipad and a heated pathway to the hospital's emergency room.

The center's board expressed an interest in securing a full-time air ambulance service to serve all of southwest Iowa and northwest Missouri.

When Mercy and Air Methods, longtime partners in air ambulance service in Iowa, learned of Clarinda's vision, discussions began.

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