

## Local hospital shows off its commitment to rural health care



A lab tech demonstrates the use of the portable X-ray machine.

By Tony Pearson

Last week, the claim was made loud and proud: the North Hastings hospital is one of the best in all of rural Ontario. The claim was made by Kim Bishop, fund development chair, and Tammy Davis, hospital site manager, to representatives of the municipalities it serves. Davis even contended that North Hastings stacks up well when compared to city hospitals.

Then they proceeded to back up their claim by showing the hospital's capabilities.

Certainly in terms of up-to-date equipment, the six-bed hospital is "punching above its weight." To give just one example, on a tour of the facility, an X-ray technician from Trenton filling in that evening could hardly contain her enthusiasm for the equipment she was working with. "Don't get me wrong; Trenton is a great hospital," she stated, "but the machines here are fantastic; they give you instant clear read-outs." She especially liked the new mobile X-ray.

Other above and beyond capacities pointed out by Davis were the emergency room, the point-of-care lab, and the children's treatment centre. Davis noted that they had to have on hand supplies that a small hospital normally wouldn't carry, because of the distances some people must travel to get treatment, and the need to reduce extra travel to urban health centres.

"We prefer not to ship our patients out if we can avoid it," said Davis; "it reduces patient stress."

The hospital works with the two family health teams to use the Ontario Telehealth Network and visiting specialists to avoid having to send patients to Belleville or Peterborough.

Bishop noted that keeping the hospital state-of-the-art takes money. In the past decade and a half, over \$4 million has been locally raised to improve the building and its equipment. The list of equipment includes a new digital X-ray machine, a digital portable X-ray machine, ultrasound machines, blood chemistry analyzer, beds, stretchers, bladder scanners, heart monitors, entry doors, ventilators and more.

To honour those who made this possible, there is a large donor wall at the entrance. At its opening, there were about 350 plaques; now there are over 500.

Of course, there's a new shopping list. The fund development committee wants to raise \$84,000 over the next year or so to purchase a dozen lead-heart monitors, a major defibrillator, four patient lifts, and upgrades to the pharmacy. The hospital auxiliary, led by Debbie Speck, will be fundraising this summer toward these goals.

If this equipment is covered by donations, Davis said, the hospital will be able to fix its roof, and repair its generator.

Beyond equipment however, Davis pointed out, great care takes a dedicated team devoted to improving patient care. "Our informal motto is 'Imagine It's You!' We want to continuously improve the quality of our care," she asserted.