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**RGH ER to have MDs 24 hours/ 7 days a week;
Chiefland to get hospital**



Jorge Perez (left) and Dr. Devaiah Pagidipati shake hands on Thursday afternoon (June 9) in front of the Regional General Hospital sign in Williston. The two men are partners in RGH now, and they are partners in the Community Medical Center hospital that is going to open in Chiefland.

Story and Photo By Jeff M. Hardison © June 9, 2016 @ 3:07 p.m.

Updated June 9, 2016 @ 3:17 p.m.

TRI-COUNTY AREA – Big city medicine is coming to two small towns – Williston and Chiefland.

The biggest hospital news in the Tri-County Area in at least the last 10 years broke at noon today (Thursday, June 9) when two men made a joint announcement in the offices at Regional General Hospital (RGH) in Williston.

First, within the next 30 days, the Emergency Room at RGH will have emergency physicians at the ER 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-week. The RGH ER is already open 24-hours-a-day, but emergency physicians are not there yet every minute of every day and night. Within 30 days, that will be the case.

Second, a hospital to be named Community Medical Center (CMC) is going to be built in Chiefland, and construction may be completed within as soon as the next six months, although the exact timeline is not firm yet.

Dr. Devaiah Pagidipati, the medical doctor who has spent millions of dollars to bring RGH up to its current high standard of care, said he sought and found new investors for RGH.

Jorge Perez is now a managing partner in RGH and CMC.

“I found a great guy,” Dr. Pagidipati said. “He is kind of a pioneer. He helps troubled rural hospitals. He does an amazing job.”

Perez is a well-established healthcare businessman who has more than 30 years in the healthcare profession.

“I am a savior of Florida rural hospitals.” Perez said. “Every year, 40 to 60 hospitals close down because of the inadequacy of clinicians to support these facilities.”

Perez has created services to bring to hospitals to generate added revenue. And his methods work.

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One key is telemedicine. This means that when an emergency room doctor at RGH discovers a unique situation, he has access to the best and brightest medical doctors at the touch of a button. Those other doctors can be in the ER in a virtual manner to assist the emergency physicians who are actually there.

“I met ‘Dr. P’ about six months ago,” Perez said. “We have mutual friends from the past. I came out here and I fell in love with this place.”

(Dr. Devaiah Pagidipati is known by many people as “Dr. P” and his wife Dr. Rudrama Pagidipati, also a doctor, is known as “Mrs. Dr. P” by many people.)

Perez said that as a Floridian, he loves to do things in his own state.

“I’ve always said, under my watch there will be no hospital closing – at least in Florida,” Perez said.

He is not just talk.

Just as Dr. Pagidipati and his wife Dr. Rudrama Pagidipati have proved their professional skills in business and in medicine, Perez has established himself as the man who saves economically troubled rural hospitals in Florida.

One example of that is Campbellton-Graceville Hospital of Graceville. Perez said a news report that the hospital was going to close its doors in three days that he saw one Friday, caused him to be there on that Monday and assure it stayed open.

Within three days, he established what needed to be done for the hospital to remain viable and vibrant. That was 18 months ago. Today, it is flourishing. It has doubled the staff.

The hospital’s services have been extended to other cities – to Mariana and Bonifay.

That hospital has patients singing praises about the level of service they receive there.

“This is a testament to what we can do when the whole community, the employees of the hospital and good business practices come into play,” Perez said.

Perez said he is bringing his methods of success to Williston and to the new hospital that will be built in Chiefland.

Perez is not connected with the would-be developers of the previously proposed hospital in Chiefland that had been promised for 10 years.

If the City of Chiefland works with Perez to the degree that it did with those other interests, then the hospital could be built, and up and running, as soon as in six months.

Dr. Pagidipati said he intends to obtain a Certificate Of Need (CON) from the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. Perez said that he and Dr. Pagidipati have “Plan A” and “Plan B” to continue the improvements at RGH as well as to construct and open the new hospital in Chiefland.

In fact, all of the improvements thus far at RGH are a trend that continues today.

RGH Vice President of Operations Raj Ravi said RGH is seeking to hire Certified Nursing Assistants, Licensed Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses. Call the hospital at 352-528-2801 to speak about obtaining a job at RGH, he said. Or, click on the link marked “Careers” at the website

<http://regionalgeneral.com/careers.htm>.

Beyond the benefit of creating more health professional jobs in the Tri-County Area, the improvements to the RGH Emergency Room and the addition of the hospital in Chiefland are going to be a major shot in the arm of the economic engines in the Tri-County Area.

Soon, there will be no need to drive from Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties to hospitals in Alachua or Marion counties.

“We want to keep healthcare dollars in the community here,” Dr. Pagidipati said. “Then, those dollars are reinvested in other businesses here and it helps our local economy.”

Dr. Pagidipati said he wants people to know, too, that if they have no insurance, or little insurance, or high deductibles, RGH and CMC have, and will have, respectively sliding scales for payments.