

Monmouth Medical Center celebrates its 125th anniversary

Published: Wednesday, September 12, 2012, 7:15 PM

Updated: Wednesday, September 12, 2012, 8:04 PM



By **Rob Spahr / NJ.com**



Rob Spahr / NJ.com

Monmouth Medical Center President Frank Vozos, right, Long Branch Historical Association President Joe Reale, and Altschul Medical Library Director Frederic Pachman unveil a commemorative plaque during Monmouth Medical Center's 125th Anniversary celebration on Tuesday.



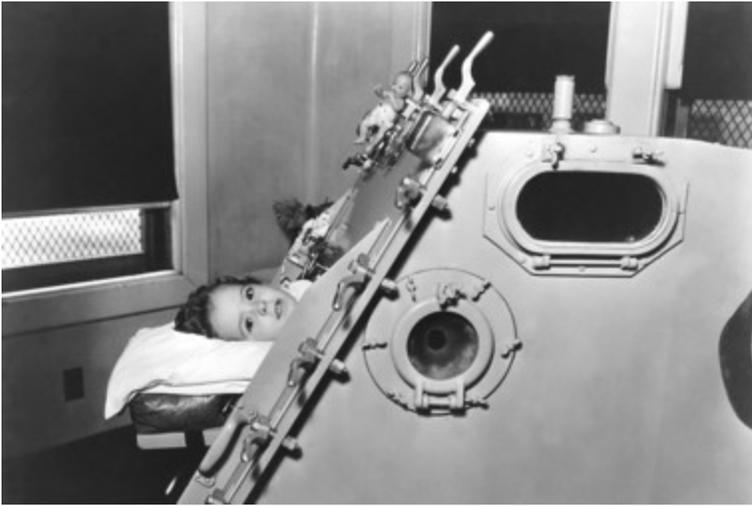
Rob Spahr / NJ.com

Monmouth Medical Center staff and visitors walk past historical pictures and documents that line the walls of the 125-year-old hospital's hallways.



Rob Spahr / NJ.com

The main entrance to Monmouth Medical Center on Sept. 12, 2012.



Courtesy of Monmouth Medical Center

Pediatric patient Claire Rita Sigmund is photographed in an Iron Lung during the early days of Monmouth Medical Center.

LONG BRANCH – What began as a few rooms above a delicatessen in 1887 is now a 1-million-square-foot teaching hospital with about 1,700 employees.

On Wednesday afternoon, Monmouth Medical Center celebrated its 125th anniversary with a celebration outside of its main entrance.

“The region is rich with good health care and we like to think that this is where it all started,” said Dr. Frank Vozos, the president and CEO of Monmouth Medical Center.

Assemblywoman Caroline Casagrande, R-11, said the hospital’s staying power says something about the quality of services it provides.

“You don’t stay in business 125 years unless you’re doing something right,” Casagrande said. “But most important are the countless number of patients who have been treated here.”

But while Wednesday’s ceremony was one that celebrated the hospital’s history and achievements, Vozos said it also was a time to honor the people who made those achievements possible, including the more than 1,000 physicians who have trained there.

"It has helped to keep us on the cutting edge, because we had to be," Vozos said of the hospital's designation as a teaching hospital. "But a lot of those physicians eventually came back here, because they wanted to practice here and to be involved in the instructional process."

And included in the crowd of 150 physicians, donors and elected officials at the celebration were a handful graduates from the hospital's nursing program during the years 1953-55.

When Brick Township resident Jean Taboada and Oceanport resident Pat Bonora entered Monmouth Medical Center's three-year nursing program, there was still an iron lung in operation, the hospital was only a small fraction of what it is now and the medical treatments were relatively archaic.

The former nurses - both graduates of the nursing program's class of 1955 - said they were proud to see how far Monmouth Medical Center has come since then.

"It's amazing, that's all you can say," said Bonora, 77.

"Of all the hospitals in New Jersey, this one has always been right up at the top," Taboada said. "And we're here, because we're proud to have been a part of that."

After first being opened by area businessmen above Arnold's Delicatessen as a place to treat ailing children in 1887, the hospital relocated three times before finally moving into what was formally Long Branch's Central Hotel.

"Monmouth Medical Center was started by members of the community to help deal with what was an epidemic at that time," said Frederic Pachman, the director of the hospital's medical library. "We have grown tremendously since then, but we remain a community hospital that is in and of the community."

In addition to the medical services Monmouth Medical Center has provided over the years, the community has also benefited from the economic opportunities the hospital provided Long Branch and the surrounding communities.

“What this institution means to Long Branch would take me days to explain,” Long Branch Business Administrator Howard Woolley, Jr. said. “It ranks right behind the ocean in terms of importance to the city.”

But the hospital’s staff say they are still looking toward the future, as a few upgrades – including two new surgical suites, upgrades to its cancer center and an expanded postpartum unit – are currently under construction.

“This is a day to celebrate Monmouth Medical Center’s long-standing service to the community,” said Thomas Heleotis, the hospital’s vice president of clinical effectiveness. “But we’re also celebrating how well positioned we are for the future.”

© 2012 NJ.com. All rights reserved.