

It all began with 16 doctors, a small fundraiser, and a great need

by NATHANIEL NELSON

At the turn of the 19th century, Winona was already an industrial powerhouse. By the late 1800s, businesses like Winona Mill Company, Winona-Rushford Wagon Company, Laird Norton Company and Sugar Loaf Brewery (now known as Bub's) had found their home along the river. However, despite the economic growth and 22,000 residents, the town was still missing something. A hospital. In 1894, a group of 16 Winona men and \$4,500 kick-started a new era for health care in Winona with the renovation of the former Langley Home on the corner of Winona and Sanborn streets into the first Winona General Hospital.

which later became the College of Saint Teresa. For a few years, there was no place to get care

in town, but building one was another matter entirely. Luckily, the com-



■ Dr. Roger Hartwich; Earl Hagberg, administrator; Mrs. R.J. Selover, Auxiliary president; and Mr. E.J. (Pete) Sievers help lay the cornerstone on the new Community Memorial Hospital in 1961.

in Winona, until the Winona General Hospital Association (WGHA) was founded on February 28, 1894, to fix that very problem.

The 16 doctors who came together to create the organization knew there should be a hospital

community came together to meet that need, raising \$4,500 to renovate the Langley Home into an 18-room hospital. A year later, the Winona General Hospital Training School was founded. That first year, the hospital served 225 patients with a staff



■ Student nurses receive their caps at the first capping ceremony in 1954.

of less than 20. It was obvious that the city needed it, but it was equally obvious that the need would soon outgrow the current facilities. In 1898, the WGHA returned to appeal to the town to help build a new hospital building, more than doubling its patient capacity to 50. The appeal was a success and raised \$35,000. The East Wing was completed in 1899 on Wabasha Street between Ewing and Lincoln streets, where the Heritage Apartments are today.

This wasn't enough, of course. The hospital continued to grow, and continued to need more space. Twenty years later, the West Wing was added to the building through the help of donations and by 1926, the capacity of the hospital was raised to 130.

By the 1950s, the capabilities of the Winona General Hospital had ballooned. Births had gone from three in 1894 to 874 in 1950, with dozens of new staff and admissions numbering in the thousands. New procedures including blood transfusions, electrocardiograms, X-rays and deep therapy treatment had been added as the hospital continued to stay on the cusp of modern technology. However, this was just the start.

In 1959, a community-wide campaign was started to raise \$1,750,000 to build the new Community Memorial Hospital on the shores of Lake Winona. By April of that year, the goal had been exceeded by more than \$400,000 and the construction began on one of the biggest construction projects Winona had ever experienced.

In July 1962, more than 7,000 people toured the new facility at 855 Mankato Avenue at

its open house. The building was state-of-the-art, with a retro-futurist interior, brand-new equipment, and a welcoming view of Sugar Loaf looking down from its blufftop home.

The building continued to expand, with new additions added in 1964, 1966, 1977, and 1979. The growth didn't seem to stop, as a new emergency department, intensive care unit, pharmacies and assisted living homes

found their place in the facility. In 1996, the name Community Memorial Hospital was abandoned, and a new moniker was taken on — Winona Health.

Next week, Winona Health will celebrate its 125th anniversary of community-focused care on February 28, which Winona Mayor Mark Peterson has proclaimed "Winona Health Day."

"Winona Health is deeply rooted in this community and continuously and proactively evolves to meet the community's health care needs. For 125 years, Winona Health's mission to improve the health and well-being of the greater Winona community has remained steadfast," Peterson said in his proclamation. "Winona would not be the same without this innovative and independent, community-owned health care organization."

The hospital, which has been a staple of the community for more than a century, now exists as a sprawling campus on Lake Winona, with satellite facilities across the county.

And it all began with 16 doctors, a fundraiser, a small home and \$4,500.

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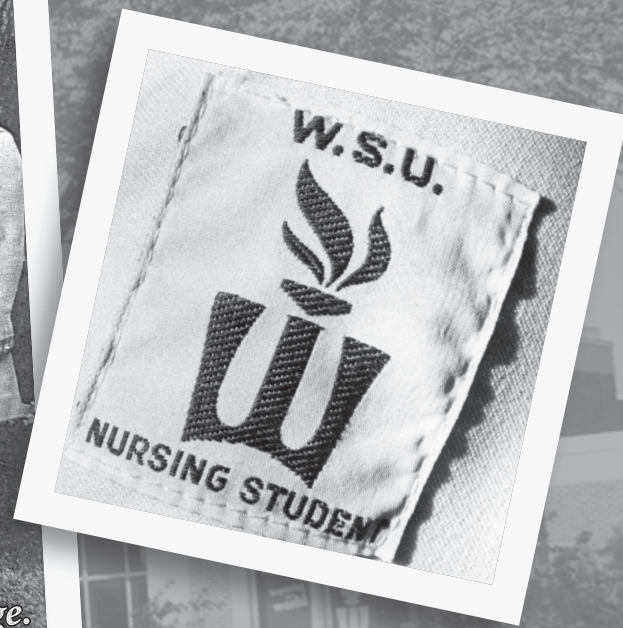


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CONGRATULATIONS WINONA HEALTH ON 125 YEARS!



1968: The first graduating nursing class of 16 students from Winona State College.



Over 50 years ago, you partnered with WSU to build one of the finest nursing programs in the nation. Thank you for all you do – for Winona State, for Winona, and beyond.

Here's to the next 125!

