

## STATE &amp; LOCAL

## Decision to sell hospital prompts a look back

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CONYERS — The Rockdale Medical Center Board of Directors made a historic decision Tuesday to sell the 53-year-old public hospital to a private firm.

The following is a history of the beginning of Rockdale County Hospital, which was founded in 1954 through a community effort.

**The need**

In the 1950s, the local economy of Rockdale County relied almost exclusively on agriculture. During this time, just two physicians served the area — Dr. Harvey Griggs and Dr. Joe Brown. Brown was the only doctor who practiced obstetrics. A birth was either performed at home or at St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta, which was accessible from Conyers via a two-lane highway through Decatur.

Many in Rockdale County recognized the need for a local clinic or a community hospital that could provide a small number of patient beds, a labor and delivery room, a nursery and an operating room suitable for performing certain general procedures, as well as one that would serve the needs of the indigent.

Then-county commissioner Homer Brisendine discussed this need with his son, Julian Brisendine (who later became the chairman of the Health Center Committee), and Brown in 1951.

Due to the recent legaliza-



The original building of Rockdale County Hospital, pictured here, was completed in 1954. Special Photo

tion of the sale of beer in the county, the local government had a new source of tax income. Homer Brisendine believed that the best way to use this controversial source of revenue was to build a health facility that could benefit all Rockdale County residents. He proposed that the county set aside \$20,000 from the tax revenue for this purpose and to begin a countywide fundraiser to finance the construction of a hospital. At first, Brisendine believed it would cost around \$55,000 to build the facility, but soon realized the actual bill would be closer to \$100,000.

**The challenge**

Soon after the county pledged the money, the Callaway Community Foundation

in LaGrange, which was a part of Callaway Mills located in Milstead, stepped up and offered to contribute to the cause. Callaway Mills owned the houses of most of the mill's employees in Milstead and provided for many of that community's needs, including stores and recreation facilities.

In November 1952, the Callaway Foundation pledged \$40,000 toward the construction of the hospital with the stipulation that another \$40,000 be raised from other sources, not including the county's \$20,000. The foundation set April 1, 1953, as the deadline for the matching funds to be raised and said that the offer would be withdrawn if the public could not meet the challenge.

**The public responds**

The residents of Rockdale County rallied around the idea of establishing a medical facility in the area, and the public donated their time and money to meet the deadline and make the hospital a reality. Money poured in from various organizations, businesses and individuals who donated anywhere from several thousand dollars to just a few dollars. For example, Milstead plant employees pooled their resources and gave nearly \$15,000.

Residents gave more than just money, too. According to one story published in The Conyers News, the predecessor to the Rockdale Citizen, one resident donated two hens to the cause. While the hens

themselves carried virtually no monetary value, the Bethel Community Club decided to use them and began collecting food items from local churches and Bethel School to sponsor a chicken supper that would serve as a fundraising event for the new hospital. The Bethel Supper netted \$143 for the hospital fund.

Other organizations held fundraising events as well, such as boxed suppers, barbecues, beauty contests, bake sales, raffles and street dances. The local radio stations, WMOC and WGST, aired programs designed to raise money for the health clinic.

For months, Rockdale residents were consumed with meeting the financial goal. The fundraising volunteers dedicated themselves to knocking on virtually every door in the county soliciting donations. The local newspaper weekly published the names of all those who supported the hospital effort and kept the public informed of each event that was scheduled in an effort to raise the requisite funds by the first of April.

**The goal met**

The Conyers News announced in its March 20 edition that the health center was \$6,000 short of its goal and that volunteers would canvas all areas of the county asking for last-minute donations. On April 2, it was announced that \$50,378.57 had been collected.

The Callaway challenge was met and exceeded, and more

than \$150,000 was available for the construction of Rockdale County's first hospital.

**The first hospital**

The Callaway Foundation stepped up again and donated the land for Rockdale County Hospital to be located on a triangle of land between Ga. Highway 20 and Conyers-Milstead Road. The facility consisted of 10 beds — six for white patients and four for black patients — labor and delivery rooms, a nursery, an operating room, a small emergency room, a kitchen and supply rooms, and two offices for doctors' rental. As a result of the new hospital, Dr. Robert M. Martin Jr. moved to Rockdale County and joined Brown's practice.

The construction of Rockdale County Hospital was completed in the fall of 1954, at which time Dr. Brown and Dr. Martin moved into the new offices. The original hospital staff consisted of Drs. Brown and Martin, Dr. Harvey Griggs of Conyers and Dr. Alfred H. Hunt, who had recently opened a practice in Lithonia. Mrs. Henry Plunkett was the first hospital administrator, and the original hospital board was chaired by Charles E. Rich. The hospital was dedicated in December 1954 with a speech by then-Gov. Herman Talmadge.

*This information was gathered through newspaper clippings from The Conyers News and from "Medical Milestones — Rockdale County Hospital," written by Carolyn M. Brown, March 8, 1985.*

## IN BRIEF

**Former security guard falsely linked to Olympic bombing dies**

■ ATLANTA — Richard Jewell lived for more than a decade with the shame caused by being wrongly linked to the 1996 Olympic bombing. The former security guard died Wednesday without closure with the newspaper he accused of starting the frenzy.

Jewell, who had diabetes, kidney problems and was on dialysis for several days recently, was found dead in his west Georgia home. He was 44. An autopsy was scheduled for Thursday, though Meriwether County Coroner Johnny Worley said foul play was not suspected.

The Jewell episode led to soul-searching among news organizations about the use of unattributed or anonymously sourced information.

— From wire reports

**Correction**

A story in the Wednesday, Aug. 29, edition of the Citizen provided the wrong date for the end qualifying for Conyers City Council elections. Qualifying for the Conyers Municipal election ends at 4:30 p.m. Friday. The Citizen regrets the error.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The City of Conyers will hold an election on Tuesday, November 6, 2007, for the purpose of electing three Council Members. One Council Member from District 2, Post 2; one from District 3; and one from District 4, for four (4) year terms, respectively, beginning January 1, 2008 and ending December 31, 2011.

Voter registration for this election will end on October 9, 2007. Only those who are residents of the City of Conyers and who are registered voters of the City are eligible to vote in this election.

Absentee voting begins October 16, 2007 and ends on November 2, 2007. Absentee ballots are to be returned to the Board of Elections at 1400 Parker Road, Conyers, GA 30094, by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

The election will be held at the First United Methodist Church and Pine Street Elementary School in Conyers from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Location of the final count will be held at 1400 Parker Road, Conyers, GA.

Pat Smith  
City Clerk

**PUBLIC NOTICE OF SPECIAL CITY ELECTION REGARDING TAX ALLOCATION DISTRICT**

Notice is hereby given that the City of Conyers, Georgia, will hold a Special City Election on Tuesday, November 6th, 2007, as part of the general election to be held on that date. The purpose of the Special City Election is for the voters of the City of Conyers to accept or reject the authorization of redevelopment powers for the City of Conyers. If approved by a majority of the City residents who vote on Tuesday, November 6th, then the City of Conyers will have the authority to undertake and carry out community redevelopment, to create tax allocation districts, to issue tax allocation bonds, to incur other obligations within the meaning of and as fully permitted under the provisions of Article IX, Section II, Paragraph VII(b) of the Constitution of the State of Georgia of 1983, as amended, and to exercise redevelopment powers. The issue on the November 6th ballot will appear as follows:

**SPECIAL CITY ELECTION**

- ( ) YES "Shall the Act be approved which authorizes the City of Conyers to exercise redevelopment powers under the 'Redevelopment Powers Law' as it may be amended from time to time?"
- ( ) NO

The polling places for residents of the City of Conyers are Pine Street School and the First United Methodist Church. The polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 6, 2007. If you have questions regarding where you may vote or regarding absentee ballots, please call Ms. Cynthia Welch, Director, Rockdale County Board of Elections and Voter Registration, at (770) 785-5947.

The City of Conyers, Georgia  
1184 Scott Street  
Conyers, Georgia 30012

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

## Male urination problems? Up at night having to "go"? Trouble starting your stream?

*Revolutionary new drug-free formula helps you regain your youthful prostate function so you'll urinate less often and sleep through the night!*

Are you a man who has to get up once or more during the night to urinate? Do you sometimes have trouble getting your stream to start? Do you look for restrooms wherever you go? Do you ever worry that you won't be able to hold it in? If you suffer with these types of prostate problems, don't give up hope because now there's good news!

Introducing **Prostalex Plus**, the amazing new all-natural supplement for men that helps solve your urination problems, improve prostate function, and boost prostate health so you won't need to urinate as often, you'll enhance urination function, and you'll finally be able to sleep through the night without any trips to the bathroom!

**Powerful new formula helps end your urination problems**

The amazing new Prostalex Plus drug-free supplement has been scientifically formulated to reduce your need to urinate by combating the natural growth of your prostate, which occurs naturally as you age and is the cause of most urination problems in men.

Containing rare, high-potency, all-natural ingredients, the Prostalex Plus formula is unique because it not only stops your constant need to urinate, it helps improve your ability to urinate (so you'll no longer have trouble getting your stream to start), and it helps you maintain a healthy prostate. That means, with Prostalex Plus you can enjoy the freedom of not having to search out a men's room wherever you go, enjoy the luxury of uninterrupted sleep, and enjoy the peace of mind that goes along with having a healthy, youthful, optimally-functioning prostate.

**Countless men are raving about Prostalex Plus**

Prostalex Plus is the safe, private, all-natural solution that's giving men the results they want without drugs, surgery, or side effects. Just listen to

what some of our satisfied customers are saying about Prostalex Plus:

*"I used to get up more than 6 times a night. Now I don't have to get up even once!"*

—Michael P.

*"I almost had to quit my job as a truck driver, but now I can go for hours and hours without having to look for a bathroom."*

—Larry D.

*"All my urination problems—urgency, frequency, low flow, dribble—they're totally gone now!"*

—Jonathan S.

If you want to regain your youthful prostate function, stop having to urinate all the time, and enjoy night after night of uninterrupted sleep, Prostalex Plus is perfect for you.

**Risk-Free Trial****Call toll-free now for your risk-free trial of Prostalex Plus!**

Contact your doctor or call the company directly toll-free now and you can get a risk-free trial of Prostalex Plus right now (a \$59.95 value; will be sent to you in plain, discreet packaging). That way you can see for yourself how effective and powerful the Prostalex Plus formula really is! Call toll-free now at 1-800-596-4960.

Call now for your risk-free trial:  
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