

Morgan Hospital and Medical Center gives award to Indiana senator: www.reporter-times.com

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MARTINSVILLE

Sen. Richard Lugar paid a quick visit to Morgan Hospital and Medical Center Saturday to receive an award for his help in obtaining a \$100,000 federal appropriation toward the purchase of a digital mammography machine.

The hospital has been leasing the machine since fall with an option to purchase.

Hospital CEO Tom Laux told Lugar that without his help, the hospital would not be able to purchase the machine.

Lugar arrived at the hospital about 1:30 p.m. He met for about 20 minutes with Laux and hospital board members in private before going to the Community and Business Advisory Council Room for the award ceremony.

No one from the city attended the meeting, but two of the county council members and the three commissioners attended the meeting. State Sen. Richard Bray along with members of the CBAC and members of the hospital staff were in attendance.

Laux said Lugar had been briefed by him and the hospital trustees about the hospital's master facilities plan and their vision for the future of the hospital campus.

"How great it would be as you are driving over the hills into Martinsville on the new interstate and you took the exit off the beautiful green interchange with immediate access to a new shining replacement hospital and medical center," Laux said. "What a great gateway that would be to Martinsville."

Laux said the senator has cosponsored legislation that could help them achieve this vision.

He said Senator Lugar was asked last year to help get funding for the Women's Life Services program. Laux said that, thanks to the senator, the hospital will be able to purchase the new equipment. He said the equipment is incredible in what it can do and how much better it is than the old equipment they had been using.

The system can more accurately assist in breast cancer detection as it picks up on more subtle images, according to Vicky Reed, MHMC's chief operating officer of patient care, who talked to the Reporter-Times in August about the equipment. She said the machine equipment produces images in less than a minute compared to 20 to 30 minutes with conventional analog systems. The machine will cost about \$300,000, according to earlier stories.

Laux gave Lugar a plaque thanking him for his work on behalf of the hospital. Lugar said it will be displayed in his office in Washington.

The senator said hospitals like MHMC are critical to the well being of residents in the area. He said Morgan Hospital is a "safety net" for residents because they take care of everyone regardless of the ability to pay. He said a high percentage of people the hospital treats have only Medicaid and Medicare and the amount of reimbursement they pay has been reduced. That, he said, puts the hospital at a disadvantage.

Lugar said there has been a move in congress to stop or put limits on earmarks. He said earmarks have become a hot topic due to the media and that there is an effort to change the way earmarks are done. The senator said many constituents expect their legislators to "bring home the bacon" when it comes to earmarks. Some legislators have said if one of their own wants an earmark, they should be public about it and put it on their own Web site before proposing it be added to legislation. He said the legislator and the proposed recipients should be prepared to justify their request. He said that effort might only be for this year or it could be for future years.

The senator talked briefly about the gridlock in Washington and how hard it is to get legislation passed.

After the presentation, the senator had to a chance to see the new equipment the hospital is leasing.