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Wal-Mart gives to hospital fund

By CAROL REITER

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The Mercy Medical Center Merced Foundation, charged with raising \$5 million to help build a new hospital in North Merced, got a shot in the arm on Thursday with a donation from the Wal-Mart Foundation.

Wal-Mart donated \$100,000 to Mercy's foundation to help equip the new hospital going up on North G Street in Merced.

At a ceremony at the site of the new hospital, Verian Booker, district manager for Wal-Mart, said her company has a long-standing tradition of charitable donations, and helping build the hospital that Merced needs is one of the most important things the company can do for Merced.

"The quality of life in Merced is measured by its health care," Booker said. "We want to help make Merced one of the best places to live and work."

Billie Razzari, president of the Mercy foundation, said the goal for the foundation is to raise \$5 million by November 2009. This donation from Wal-Mart brings the total to about \$2.8 million.

Bob Ayers, co-chairman of the hospital's capital campaign, said the donation shows how important Wal-Mart is to the community. "This is just an indication of what Wal-Mart can do for this town," Ayers said.

David Dunham, president of Mercy, said construction of the new hospital is on schedule, and plans are that patients will be moved from the old hospital to the new one in May 2010.

Dunham also announced that the medical offices building, slated to be built next to the new hospital, will have a fourth floor added to the original plans.

"The fourth floor will be an ambulatory surgery center," Dunham said. Mercy Surgical and Diagnostic Center burned in 2006 and was abandoned by the hospital. Since then, outpatient surgeries have been done at the Dominican Campus of the hospital.

"This new hospital is not merely a structure," said Barry McAuley, co-chairman of the foundation's campaign. "We will have a medical center that oozes health care out of every seam."

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