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Several Community Members Give Credit to John C. Fremont Hospital for Lifesaving Care

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By Matt Johnson, Assistant Editor | September 24, 2020 | Reprinted with Permission

Editor's note: Measure N is on the ballot in the upcoming election and would, if passed, provide sales tax revenue to John C. Fremont Hospital. This newspaper has been featuring various stories over the last few weeks about the hospital. This is the third of a four-part series.

If you're having a difficult time deciding whether to vote for Measure N — the 1 percent sales tax proposed in Mariposa County for the construction of a new hospital — perhaps your decision will be made easier by thinking about what life would be like without a hospital in Mariposa.

Sure, there are other things to consider, chief of which is, do you want to pay a little more each year in taxes?

But in simple terms, the question pretty much boils down to, is it worth it to have a hospital in Mariposa?

Would you get through that rattlesnake bite without a hospital here? Would you survive a heart attack? Do you want to risk going to a Merced hospital, where Covid rates are higher, to get a Covid test? How about that nasty fracture — do you want to have to drive all the way to Modesto to get it fixed, or would you rather take a quick JCF helicopter flight to Modesto?

Many county residents have received life-saving care from JCF over the years, and many of them are willing to share their stories in hopes of convincing others of the importance of the hospital.

If Measure N passes, it will provide approximately \$2.6 million to the hospital yearly, to help cover the cost of a new hospital. A new hospital needs to be constructed to meet California's stringent regulations regarding safety-proofing hospital facilities for earthquakes. If JCF does not come into compliance by 2030, the hospital would be shut down.

Here are the stories of those who have benefited from JCF's care, and who are planning to vote in support of Measure N this November.

Martha and Bill Pratt

The Pratts are some of the nicest people you'll ever meet (Just don't question or tease them about rooting for Boston based sports teams, or you might get an earful from them in their thick Boston accents).

"They've helped Bill several times," Martha said of JCF.

The most dramatic lifesaving care the Pratts received was in May of 2015.

"He's had small strokes, but he had a stroke and this one was a little worse," Martha said of her husband. "I called the ambulance and they took him in. It was really bad. They had a thing called a clot-buster. What it does is it breaks up the clot. There was no neurologist on staff, but they have a medical thing that is like Skype. We talked to a neurologist, but I'm not sure where she was from."

Martha said because JCF had a clot-buster and were able to administer it, her husband eventually had no after effects at all.

"They airlifted him to Community Hospital in Fresno. Before he was taken away, he really couldn't say what he wanted to say, but by the time we got there — because we had to drive there — he was fine," she said. "They saved him from having any after-effects to the stroke and possibly even from death."

In February, Bill had a "brain bleed," and JCF medical personnel diagnosed him and then airlifted him to the hospital in Fresno again.

"He went there Thursday and was home by Sunday," Martha said.

In another story a little less harrowing, and one they can laugh about now, the Pratts were helped by JCF doctors after a scary incident at the Mariposa Fairgrounds.

It happened on the first day of the Mariposa County Fair a few years ago.

"We went to the fairgrounds and there was almost nobody there. I came out of the restroom and tripped and fell. I hit him (Bill) right in his knee. He was OK (for the moment). We were roaming around," Martha said.

Bill was walking to the beer garden when his leg gave out.

"He fell down right in front of the margarita tent, so I'm sure people thought he was drunk," Martha chuckled. "I took him to the hospital. He ended up with his leg in a brace for a few days. He learned not to mess with me."

Bill Eaton

Bill Eaton prides himself on staying in shape.

He can be seen pretty much every day of the week either riding his bike or jogging through Mariposa.

But although he's about as healthy as he can be, even he had a near-death experience earlier this year.

Eaton said he had been feeling stressed and anxious ever since the outbreak of Covid-19, mainly because of the impact it was having on his business, Pony Expresso.

For about a five day stretch, he was having what he now realizes were heart attack symptoms. He thought it was simply bad anxiety.

"I went back and forth of whether I should go," Eaton said.

But one day, what he thought was anxiety "was real bad."

He decided to go jogging to burn off some steam.

But he didn't get far from his home when he knew "something was wrong."

He went into his garage and Googled the symptoms he was having. Suddenly, he began having jaw pain.

The results from Google suggested he had been having a heart attack.

"I still didn't want to believe it," he said.

Nonetheless, he got in his vehicle and drove to JCF. He said he waited for a bit in the parking lot, hoping to see whether the symptoms would persist or not.

Eventually, he knew he had to go into the emergency room right away. He did so.

"They were trying to keep me calm, but I could see on their faces something was wrong," he said.

Shortly after entering the ER, he was being put on the hospital's emergency helicopter.

"There was no hesitation or waiting period," he said.

He was taken to Modesto, where he received the lifesaving care he needed.

"They called it a widow-maker: the worst heart attack you can have," he said.

Eaton said he was discharged in two days.

“Basically, JCF saved my life, big time,” he believes.

Eaton was clear to say it wasn’t cholesterol or anything like that which created the heart attack.

“It wasn’t due to high cholesterol. It was due to Covid stress (about my business),” he said.

Eaton is doing well now, a few months later. He is back at Pony Expresso, doing what he loves.

“I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for them. We’ve got to have something here,” he said.

Pat Stacy

Another individual who benefited greatly from JCF’s care was Pat Stacy, who had a pulmonary embolism not long ago.

“I think I would have survived (without JCF being in Mariposa), but the fact that I got treated immediately and didn’t have to go somewhere — they couldn’t even find a room for me somewhere else — I don’t know what they would have done if they had picked me up in an ambulance and I didn’t have another hospital to go to,” she said.

Stacy said she could not get enough oxygen into her body, so she called 911.

“I was just impressed with the fact that although I was coming in and might have Covid-19, I got tested right away because they had that (rapid testing) machine and they found out right away it wasn’t the virus. The blood test they did let them know immediately what it was,” Stacy said.

Stacy said she was impressed with the thoroughness of all the tests the medical personnel ran.

“They knew within a short time what was wrong with me. They knew I needed critical heart care and began to look for a hospital they could transfer me to. All hospitals in Fresno and Merced were not taking patients. The search required many phone calls. Eventually, Memorial Hospital in Modesto would take me, and I was transported there,” she said.

Stacy said because of the timely service she received, “it prevented more damage” from happening.

“When you’re 81, if you can survive something like this and not have it impact the rest of your life, I think that’s what the hospital did. It provided me a comfortable rest of my life, because it was there,” she said. “Even I have stories about bad things that have happened to me there, and things that were because of incompetence or laziness of the staff, or the hospital not being tip-top or up to date with whatever. But overall, we are so lucky to have this hospital.”

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