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'Breathtaking' cancer center opens

New Post Falls facility gets rave reviews

POST FALLS -- Mary Ann Dupre-Jacobs felt like she was walking into a health spa on Thursday, not a medical building. The Coeur d'Alene woman visited the new Kootenai Cancer Center in Post Falls for the first time for chemotherapy. "Even in the winter time it's going to be a very beautiful environment with its windows and the way it looks outside to the landscaping," she said. "One has the feeling that you're indoors but also outdoors. The entire layout of this building is really quite breathtaking."

The public can tour the \$14.5 million, 21,000-square-foot facility at 1440 E. Mullan Ave. next to Kootenai Health's health park on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. It began serving patients on Tuesday as originally scheduled.

Registered nurse Becky Vogel explains the chemotherapy drug being administered to Mary Ann Dupre-Jacobs during a treatment Thursday at Kootenai Health's new cancer center in P

Dupre-Jacobs said the facility was constructed with the patients in mind. It features art by local painters and sculptors, a pair of fireplaces and sweeping views of a meditation garden intended to create a serene atmosphere conducive to healing.

"If a patient has to go somewhere four days a week, it can be depressing," Dupre-Jacobs said. "I don't feel like a patient when I'm there. The ambiance distracts you from what you are there for. I felt like I was being pampered with all the glass, light and landscaping. Everything was so modern, clean and convenient."

Architects Rann Haight and Roy Marshall, both of Coeur d'Alene, designed the two-story structure with an abundant use of stone and natural elements to give it a Northwest feel. Jeanne Atha, director of the Kootenai Cancer Centers in Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls and Sandpoint, said studies indicate the need for cancer services in North Idaho are expected to increase 40 percent over the next 10 years.

The Post Falls center will ease pressure from Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint and better serve clients on the west side of Kootenai County and Eastern Washington, Atha said.

"We're positioning ourselves for future growth," she said. "We knew we'd be outgrowing our Coeur d'Alene site and we made the decision to spread out rather than expand in Coeur d'Alene."

Facility 1



The new center offers a full regiment of cancer care and treatment options. Haluk Tezcan and Brian Samuels, both medical oncologists; Karie-Lynn Kelly, a radiation oncologist; and Sue Herbst, a nurse-practitioner, are based in the facility.

"Our radiation therapy capabilities are state-of-the-art and have more functionality than those in Coeur d'Alene," Atha said.

Additionally, Kootenai's cancer research program, a laboratory and a pharmacy are housed in the two-story building. In the coming year a complementary therapy program will be offered, including massage therapy, yoga, acupuncture, strength training and skin therapy. "We'll be attending not only to patients' medical needs, but also their emotional and spiritual sides," Atha said.

Prior to the new center opening, only part-time cancer services were offered at Kootenai Health's health park in Post Falls. Kootenai's long-term plan includes a three-story parking garage for its 10-acre Post Falls site that was donated by the Schneidmiller family.

Meanwhile, the Coeur d'Alene cancer center will continue to provide full cancer services. Staff there includes Alan Grosset, Stephen Iacoboni and Naseer Ahmad, all medical oncologists, and David Davenport, a radiation oncologist.