

# Long-time Christmas tradition coming back to Clara Barton Hospital

During the Christmas season, it was a yearly tradition that a life-sized nativity scene was positioned on the front lawn of Clara Barton Hospital, all lit up for by-passers to admire. The nativity scene was a Christmas staple for many community members, and even those from out of town, who enjoyed the beautiful scene that represented the true meaning of the Christmas season.

Although the nativity scene was a special part of the Christmas tradition throughout the Hoisington community, the scene has not been displayed for many years. In hopes to continue the tradition of the life-sized nativity, Clara Barton Hospital is working to restore the nativity figurines and hopes to display the scene once again on the front lawn of the hospital for many years to come.

"This project just really felt good for our community," said Clara Barton Hospital President/CEO Jim Blackwell. "We noticed right away that the nativity had a very strong public appeal and I wanted to see the hospital bring back something that was very special to the community."

The nativity scene project was originally facilitated and funded by the Hoisington Lutheran Hospital Association. Over the years, the scene has been passed on to different organizations who agreed to take charge of the assembly of the nativity. Having a nativity display was a tradition almost as old as the hospital, but the tradition came to a halt over 10 years ago when the nativity was stored and never made another appearance.



Joel Hutchcraft works to patch a hole in the side of the camel with fiberglass. (courtesy photo)

"We (Clara Barton Hospital) are excited bring the nativity tradition back to the community and will be taking on the responsibility of the set up and break down of the nativity scene each year along with any other needed maintenance," said Blackwell.

Last December, the Masonic Lodge presented Clara Barton Hospital with the key to the shed that currently houses the life-sized nativity scene. Although almost all of the figurines were accounted for, there was one important piece missing, baby Jesus. After hearing the news of the missing baby Jesus, Clara Barton Hospital Foundation Board member Bob Schreiber stepped in to help.

In memory of Bob's parents, Richard and Mary Ann Schreiber, Bob and his wife Denise donated a new baby Jesus lying in a manger that will be added to the existing nativity set.

"After my parents passed, we set up a donation fund in their memory," said Schreiber. "My mom always enjoyed the nativity scene that was displayed in front of the hospital, so when I heard about the restoration of the nativity, I knew this project was the perfect way to make a donation in memory of her."

Although all of the figurines are now accounted for, many of them are in need of tender love and care to get them back into tip-top shape.

"I was originally a little over zealous and wanted to put the nativity up right away, but after careful thought and consideration, we decided it would better to put the effort into restoring the nativity scene before it goes on display," said Blackwell. "I just feel that it is really good to be able to do something from the hospital perspective that can be Christ-centered. There's not enough of that in the world today."

Clara Barton Hospital's maintenance crew has been working diligently to begin the restoration of the figurines in hopes to have them displayed during the 2017 Christmas season. Due to the age of the nativity set and extensive wear and tear, many of the figurines have holes that need patched and cracks in the paint that need retouched.

The maintenance crew, consisting of Joel Hutchcraft, Teddy Brown, Rex Meek and Kerri Brinlee, have been working to patch the holes with fiberglass

and will soon be applying a base coat of paint to all the figurines to prepare them for repainting. Although the maintenance crew will be able to complete the majority of the restoration themselves, they are in search for volunteers to assist Clara Barton Employees Sarah Detter, Jennifer Mickle and Melissa Scheck in the repainting and detailing of the nativity figurines.

"It has been a joy to work on this project because it is going to bring a lot of happiness back to our community," said Hutchcraft. "A lot of people have said that they miss seeing it out on the front lawn, and it's going to be a great to see it set up again."

Aside from the restoration process, the hospital's maintenance crew will be taking the lead on the set up of the nativity scene each year. "The hospital's initiative to bring the nativity scene back to life is not only important for us now, but also for the generations to come,"

said Michelle Moshier, Clara Barton Hospital Foundation Executive Director. "Any donation to help cover the costs of the supplies needed to repair fiber glass, paint and to secure lighting would be greatly appreciated."

If you would like to make a donation, are interested in assisting with painting and detailing, or would like to learn more about how you can bring the nativity project to life, please call the Clara Barton Foundation at 620-653-5012.

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