

# Beam-signing ceremony held for new Valley Crest facility

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PLAINS TWP. — Top officials from the privatized Valley Crest nursing and rehabilitation center were hoisted about 20 feet on a construction lift Tuesday to sign a beam on a \$12 million facility being constructed next to the county-owned facility.

Peter Licari, president and CEO of Complete HealthCare Resources, said the three-story, 180-bed facility should be completed by the end of the year. It will offer in-patient rehabilitation services, a 30-bed memory impairment support unit, a patio and air conditioning as well as cable television and Internet access in all rooms.

Complete HealthCare Resources, based in Dresher, Montgomery County, purchased 8.2 acres of land from Luzerne County for \$779,000 in January 2006 to build the new nursing home.

The county still owns the current facility and agreed to let the private company rent it until a new one is built. When the new facility is built, Licari said it's Luzerne County officials' decision what to do with the old facility.

After a bidding process, Mericle Commercial Real Estate was awarded a contract last year to prepare a marketing plan for Valley Crest.

Luzerne County Commissioner Chairwoman Maryanne Petrilla said county officials will determine a plan for the property once the marketing plan is complete. Amid the county's financial constraints, Petrilla said county officials may consider selling it.

"Putting money in the existing building doesn't seem feasible," Petrilla said. "Obviously, the land is not as valuable as was projected back in the previous administration because of access issues. It's valuable, but it's not as valuable as originally projected."

The old Valley Crest nursing home, known as the Luzerne County Home for the Indigent Infirm, was established in October 1958. At one time, the nursing home had 400 beds, Licari said.

Valley Crest now has 172 residents. The new facility will continue the county's indigent care policies, he said. "There will be no change because most residents are paid for by Medicare or Medicaid," Licari said. "We are contracted to take care of the county's indigent as part of what we do."

A benefit of having a private facility over a county-owned facility is that Complete HealthCare Resources was able to get financing for construction, Licari said.

"A private operator gets paid more under the Medicaid program than the county gets paid," he said. "We're able to get more revenue, and as a result, we were able to get the financing. It takes the county taxpayers out of the risk of covering the cost."

Complete HealthCare Resources has converted county-owned nursing homes into private facilities in 14 counties, Licari said. The company manages more than 20 nursing facilities and retirement communities in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Virginia and provides consulting services in Texas through an affiliate.

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