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The once satellite hospital becomes Butler County's largest.

## Mercy Fairfield reaches 35 years

By Chelsey Levingston

Staff Writer

**FAIRFIELD** — Mercy Health-Fairfield Hospital administrators and employees celebrated this past week the hospital's 35th anniversary of opening.

It's hard to imagine the bustling multi-building campus on Mack Road was once farmland.

Nowadays, the Fairfield hospital is the city's third largest employer of nearly 1,500 full- and part-time staff. The hospital sits on a 40-acre campus that includes a five-story patient tower, ambulatory surgical center, medical office building and the HealthPlex, a gym and wellness center.

"The story of Fairfield's growth and development is the child outgrew the parent," said Thomas Urban, market leader and president of Mercy Health-North Market.

Thirty-five years ago, Hamilton was a vibrant community and Fairfield was just beginning to grow and develop, Urban said. Mack Road and Interstate 275 had not yet been finished, he said.

Originally, Mercy opened its first hospital in Hamilton in 1892 in a residence. And the Mercy Hamilton hospital building opened in 1904, according to The Lane Libraries.

In the 1970s, Sister Mary Colette, then the administrator of Mercy Hamilton, had the "foresight" to open a satellite hospital in Fairfield, Urban said. It was not a popular decision and fears were that opening a satellite location would take away from the Hamilton hospital's resources.

At that time, Hamilton "was big enough and busy enough to support those two hospitals, Fort Hamilton and Mercy Hamilton," Urban said.

"Back before all these sophisticated planning tools and market research and all these analytics we use today...she had a vision, knowing that they needed to expand the services beyond the city of Hamilton," Urban said. "Sister Colette was looking to expand Mercy's footprint in Butler County and the City of Fairfield was starting to sow its oats."

Mercy Fairfield was constructed as a 150-bed satellite hospital. Support services were supplied by Mercy Hamilton, such as laundry and linen, supply storage, meeting room space and food service.

Urban started at Mercy in Butler County in 1993, and at that time, he said the hospital was cramped and undersized in things such as dock loading and storage space.

Over time, the Fairfield hospital campus grew. The ambulatory surgical center and medical office building had been built in the mid-1980s. Then the HealthPlex was built in the late 1990s.

The next big change in the campus was from 2002 to 2005, when a multi-million patient tower was built onto the hospital. That expansion in the early 2000s “almost doubled the size of the square footage of the hospital,” Urban said.

Since Mercy Fairfield first opened in 1978, its transitioned from a satellite hospital to one the largest hospitals serving Butler County with 293 registered inpatient beds. It compares in size to Middletown’s Atrium Medical Center.

Mercy Hamilton closed in 2001. The old hospital is now demolished and the site of RiversEdge Park and Amphitheater.

In the last year, Mercy Fairfield built-out a new private patient floor, opened a wound care center, and expanded its robot-assisted surgery program to include gallbladder and bariatric surgeries in addition to prostatectomies and gynecological surgeries. Next, hospital officials hope to start phase two of renovations to the Family Birth Center, to upgrade a special care nursery.

Mercy Fairfield is recognized as one of the nation’s top 50 heart hospitals.

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