

GUEST VIEWPOINTS

CHARLES MILLER



Trust us to care for RMC

When the Rockdale Medical Center Board of Trustees and the Rockdale County Health Authority began discussions with Signature Hospital Corporation last year, we saw a rare opportunity for two missions to overlap and align.

The authority and board had the intention of securing continuity for their struggling hospital, to assure their community the stabilizing presence of an excellent and reliable medical center.

Signature had the intention, as we always do, of providing resources — both management expertise and capital — that would allow RMC to provide the best possible service to the Conyers community.

We are honored that the authority and board selected Signature as the best partner for RMC and the community. We believe they did so because they knew that Signature's philosophy centers upon empowering our affiliated hospitals to fulfill their mission to the community while allowing their boards to retain local autonomy.

We see local autonomy as a vital element in allowing hospitals to best serve their constituencies — by knowing and responding to the needs of that particular community both in style and in substance.

The sale of a hospital that for so long has been a focal point of its community can arouse great apprehensiveness within that community: "Will my doctors be able to give me the best treatment?" "Will service become impersonal and corporatized?" Even, "Will the name of the hospital change?"

Rockdale Medical Center will keep its name. And we will seek to partner with its excellent physicians and staff to make RMC even better. And it will keep a local board of directors, who are members of the community and who have an abiding interest in the long-term quality of life in the Conyers area.

But to achieve that efficiency at the expense of the best possible patient care would be antithetical to everything we believe in. We do oversee our hospitals, but that is in the interest of ensuring that patients are being treated with respect and responsiveness to their needs.

Signature eschews a mass-production, assembly-line approach to patient care as dishonoring of both the humanity of the patient and the skill of practitioners who are his or her physicians and caregivers.

Community history gathers around a hospital. In a secular world, hospitals can take on the quality of sacred space. They are sites for passages in and out of life, for humans at their most vulnerable when injured or ill. They are spaces in which illness can be transformed into wellbeing and where injury can be transformed into wholeness.

Hospitals do not proclaim themselves to be sacred space; they are made so by the experiences of families there, as family members and friends attend their loved ones. To witness for any time at all the sincerity, earnestness and absolute openness of people visiting in hospitals would, I hope, humble any of us involved in health care management.

So let me say that from the top down, we at Signature take our awesome responsibility utterly seriously.

We do realize that however rich with emotion a hospital floor can become, no one really wants to be there; however, the time we spend in hospitals can be made either more or less humane, communicative, responsive, supportive, patient-focused and positive.

We have chosen to make it more of all of these, and by doing so to raise the standard of care and customer service in the way we treat our patients. We value the importance of your hospital to your community, and we will work tirelessly to earn the trust and respect of the hospital employees, physicians and the Conyers community as we work together to continue a tradition of excellence.

Charles Miller is the CEO of Signature Hospital Corporation.