

# Wareham's Tobey Hospital breaks ground on \$25 million emergency department expansion

Residents of Wareham, elected officials and Southcoast Health staff celebrated on Friday the start of construction on Tobey Hospital's emergency department expansion, a \$25 million capital project funded in part by philanthropic contributions from the community.

The expansion, with a target completion date of late 2020, will quadruple the facility's space to 25,000 square feet and increase the number of treatment rooms from 15 to 27. Behavioral health patients will have access to six specially designed treatment rooms for provider response to substance abuse disorders and mental health crises. The current emergency department was last renovated in 1987 and was meant to accommodate 15,000 patients annually, half the 30,000 patients the Tobey emergency department now receives each year. The renovated emergency department will accommodate 40,000 patients per year.

"This is how a community-based health system responds to community needs," Southcoast Health President and CEO Keith Hovan told the crowd at the groundbreaking ceremony, which took place during Emergency Nurses Week. "Patients will be treated in privacy, and families will wait in comfort. Our staff will deliver their excellent clinical care in spacious surroundings that enhance their work experience. As a former nurse manager of a busy emergency department, I know firsthand how demanding the emergency medical setting is. As a father, husband and friend, I also know what it's like to be on the other side."

Tobey Emergency Department Manager Deborah Gonsalves, RN, said her staff looks forward to the improvements.

“In the current ED, our nurses, techs and providers deliver high-quality care in incredibly tight quarters, and they never let the stress of working in such a crowded space get to them or their patients,” Gonsalves said. “The new ED’s design will allow them to take that care to an even higher level, ensuring more personal interaction when patients need it most. A carefully planned layout will increase efficiency, so that patients can be seen and treated more quickly.”

Wareham Board of Selectmen Chair Patrick G. Tropeano agreed on the importance of the expansion, relating two personal stories about the personalized, world-class care offered at Southcoast Health, as well as the commitment of Southcoast providers to their community.

“Back in 2009, my family was involved in an accident out on the highway. The car rolls over; the car’s upside down. One of my children is severely injured. My 9-year-old daughter,” Tropeano said. “They get her out of there, but they can’t get Life Flight [due to inclement weather]. But our EMS get her here to Tobey, where they stabilize her. They take good care of her, and then they’re ready to get her off to Boston Children’s Hospital, where she undergoes hours of surgery and many months of recovery. And without Tobey Hospital, that wouldn’t have happened. So, thank you. ... Nobody wants to come to the emergency room, but Tobey’s staff is so good at their jobs, and so good at comforting you. Doesn’t matter who you are or what you are – they’re going to take care of you. And with this needed expansion, that care will be even better.”

In his official capacity with the town of Wareham, Tropeano had a different kind of encounter with the Tobey emergency department. He recalled engaging Southcoast Health to assist the work of a local committee that runs a drop-in center focused on helping those affected by the opioid crisis. The

next time he visited the drop-in center, he saw that Tobey Hospital already had set up a table and that Dr. Sarah Bernier, a physician in the Tobey emergency department, was present and ready to help.

“I said ‘Wow, they took this pretty seriously, sending a trauma doctor over here during your shift,’” Tropeano recalled. “And she said, ‘Well, I volunteered. It’s something important to this community, and I want to be a part of it.’ These are the kinds of things Southcoast hospitals do that people don’t see. The only people who see it are the ones who need it at the time.”

U.S. Rep. Bill Keating said that the expanded emergency department at Tobey represents a commitment to the region that will have an immediate positive impact.

“Our community benefits in so many ways from Southcoast Health’s clinical services, investments and partnerships,” Rep. Keating said. “I’m proud to work with the town of Wareham as well as with Southcoast on far-reaching initiatives like these. Today, I congratulate both on further supporting and strengthening our area’s emergency services, first responders and all of the physicians, nurses and staff who provide high-quality health care.”