

Bethesda West Hospital Ground Breaking **By Ken Lassiter COBWRA President**

This is a great day for the Bethesda Memorial Hospital management and employees. It is also great day for the people of West Boynton and for COBWRA.

I remember another day clearly. It was April 24, 2003, a Thursday. There was a hearing before the Treasure Coast Health Council to determine a recommendation to the State Agency on Health Care Administration for a Certificate of Need for a new hospital in West Boynton. A number of COBWRA officers testified. Past President Lew Doctor spoke. President Sandy Greenberg and First Vice President Barbara Katz spoke. As COBWRA Second Vice President, I also testified.

COBWRA pleaded with the officials to look at our growth record and projected future population gains. We told them how long it takes to drive from the corner of Boynton Beach Blvd and Jog Road to the hospitals presently in the area. We related how long people were waiting in emergency rooms during the season. They listened and the recommendation of the Council was for approval. The State of Florida agreed and awarded approval for a new hospital to Bethesda. We were ecstatic!

Other hospitals promptly sued to get the approval switched to them. The lawyers representing the hospitals called those of us who had testified to give depositions. This happened again and again with each new appeal. Twice, COBWRA President Sandy Greenberg flew to Tallahassee to testify at trials. I recall one occasion when Sandy organized a notebook with letters from over 100 communities in support of the Certificate of Need for Bethesda. When she presented this notebook of letters to the judge, it made a strong impression.

A year ago, the final decision came down with the Certificate of Need awarded to Bethesda. Last December, at a meeting at the hospital, we watched the clock tick down as the final appeal deadline expired.

Today, we salute the COBWRA Presidents who worked so hard over the years to make a hospital possible. Thank you! We pay homage to the Delegates who spoke before their Boards, sought their support and collected all those letters. We thank the people on COBWRA's Bethesda West Hospital Support Committee, led by COBWRA Director Myrna Rosoff. This committee organized a survey to learn what people expected in the new hospital. They arranged a series of community meetings so residents would learn about the building plans and the medical services that will be offered. By the way, if your community is not yet on the schedule, we are still taking bookings.

The people of West Boynton are proud of their new hospital. They can also be proud of their civic organization, the Coalition of Boynton West Residential Associations.

COBWRA congratulates the Bethesda officials who stood firm in their pursuit of approval. We are grateful you were never dismayed by the legal obstacles thrown into your path. We most sincerely appreciate this incredible high-tech new health care facility. It will save lives and mean so much to so many people in the years and years to come. Thank you for Bethesda West Hospital.

In 1981, Dr. Richard Carrington, organized the Coalition with just seven community members. His vision was for an organization to manage growth sensibly. Dr. Carrington wanted an organization who would work hard to improve and maintain a high quality of life for the people in West Boynton. I like to believe that Dr. Carrington is looking down today and can see the volunteers from the 90 communities who make COBWRA the most important civic organization in Palm Beach County. I bet he is pleased. I bet Dr. Carrington is saying, **“It is a Great Day!”**