

# SIERRA VISTA HOSPITAL WING DEDICATED TO NEW MEXICO STATE SENATOR JOHN ARTHUR SMITH

New Mexico's former **State Senator, John Arthur Smith**, was honored at a March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 dedication ceremony at Sierra Vista Hospital in Sierra County, New Mexico. With deep gratitude for Senator Smith's role in helping the hospital keep it doors open and eventually prosper over the past several years, Sierra Vista Hospital officially dedicated its rural health clinic, which opened in 2019, to the Senator, naming it the **Senator John Arthur Smith Rural Health Clinic**.



Senator Smith's connection with the hospital started in 1998 when the then Adventist Hospital administration abruptly abandoned the hospital, taking the profits and leaving the keys with the hospital board chair. Senator Smith was instrumental in bringing the talented and experienced Domenica "D" Rush back as administrator for a second tour of duty, a move that proved to be the hospital's lifeline. Senator Smith also led the effort to bring Rush back for a third run, from 2008 to 2013, to once again help stabilize the operation. In a 2020 quote, Senator Smith said this: "We loved D Rush. She was going to see people in hell before she'd see the hospital close!" Several years later, when the hospital was floundering under the CEO at that time, Senator Smith played a key role in securing Quorum Health Resources to manage the hospital and turn it around.



While Senator Smith's efforts to save the hospital were all greatly valued, his role in securing funding for a new hospital wing was the most significant of all. He worked relentlessly to help secure the \$30M needed for the new building from the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (LFC,) and when the actual price far exceeded the quote, he worked with Quorum Health Resources to redesign the building to reduce the overall costs. When it was determined that \$35M was the final project cost, Senator Smith went back to the LFC, convincing them to

contribute the additional \$5M. If not for the Senator's involvement, the hospital and a local nursing home would have closed. and the New Mexico State Veteran's Home in Truth or Consequences would have found it necessary to relocate.

The dedication ceremony opened with remarks by Frank Corcoran, Sierra Vista Hospital CEO, who first met Senator Smith in 2019. Corcoran shared details regarding the hospital's bright future, which, he noted, is possible in large part due to Senator Smith's efforts. He also spoke about strategies for additional construction and services over time. Former Truth or Consequences City Manager, Bruce Swingle, shared the many ways Senator Smith gave of his time, talents, and energy to help the hospital survive in spite of the odds, and former State Representative Rebecca Dow spoke about the much-appreciated mentorship she received from Senator Smith when she was new to the House.



Community leader Susan LaFont wrapped up the remarks by thanking Senator Smith for all his hard work, determination, and dedication, without which the community would have been left without the 46K sq ft. hospital and the broad range of services residents enjoy today. The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of the rural health clinic entrance with the words "**Senator John Arthur Smith Rural Health Clinic**" in silver lettering above the doors.

"Our entire community owes Senator John Arthur Smith our thanks and appreciation." said Corcoran. "It's hard to believe that one man would give so much of himself to ensure our community did not lose this precious resource. We are forever in his debt, which is why we are so very proud to have dedicated our new rural health clinic to his name. Today we proudly unveiled the John Arthur Smith Rural Health Clinic. May every person who passes through its doors do so with appreciation and respect for this selfless, caring man." Corcoran added.