

Groundbreaking ceremony planned for animal hospital

The private veterinary specialty hospital will be the first Delaware Valley facility outside the University of Pennsylvania to offer radiation therapy to treat pets for cancer.

By CHRIS ENGLISH
STAFF WRITER

A new \$6 million state-of-the-art destination for ailing animals will soon start taking shape in Middletown.

Dr. Robert Orsher and his partners with the Veterinary Specialty and Emergency Center are building the 21,000-square-foot, 24-hour hospital for dogs, cats and other small animals near the University of Phoenix building on Veterans Highway (Route 413) near

Business Route 1. A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for noon this Saturday (rain date Sunday), and construction is expected to take about a year.

The new hospital will handle pets on an emergency and referral basis and is replacing the 5,000 square-foot VSEC hospital on Old Lincoln Highway across from Neshaminy High School.

"VSEC has been serving the commu-

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An artist rendering shows the \$6 million facility, which will have surgery and endoscopy suites, a CT scanner, a dedicated intensive care unit and a 7,000-square-foot multi-station general treatment area.

Hospital

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nity since its doors opened in September of 1994," said Orsher. "Fortunately, we have enjoyed steady growth and have been actively looking for a site to build a larger hospital for the last five or six years. While the economic hardships of late 2008 and 2009 hurt all of us, our practice has remained profitable, but with slower growth.

"The new hospital will have many more features than our current facility and will be able to provide advanced care in the fields of critical care medicine, surgery, imaging, oncology, internal medicine, ophthalmology, cardiology, dermatology and acupuncture," he added.

Orsher's partners in the new practice will be Dr. Laura Tseng, Dr. Alan Klag and BluePearl Veterinary Partners. Orsher said BluePearl is one of the nation's leading providers of emergency and specialized referral veterinary care, with hospitals in Florida, Kansas, Minnesota, New York and Tennessee.

The owners of the real estate will be Orsher, his wife, Dr. Andrea Orsher, Tseng and

al veterinary facilities in Florida and New York.

Orsher said the new building represents a \$5 million investment in construction and \$1 million in new equipment. He and his partners bought a 2.27-acre piece of the 9.93-acre Phoenix site from BPG Properties of Wilmington and received subdivision and land development approval from the Middletown supervisors last year. The property was formerly the site of the I-95 Marketplace and some other failed ventures.

The new hospital will have surgery and endoscopy suites, a CT scanner, a dedicated intensive care unit, a 7,000-square-foot multi-station general treatment area, comfort-designed separate wards for dogs, cats and animals with infectious diseases and a large conference and presentation center for community events and continuing education for veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

Orsher said the new facility will offer radioactive iodine treatment for hyperthyroidism in cats and will be the first private veterinary specialty hospital

in the Delaware Valley to offer radiation therapy for the treatment of cancer in pets, a treatment now only available at the University of Pennsylvania.

Antech Diagnostics, a nationwide network of integrated veterinary diagnostic laboratories, will operate a branch lab from the new hospital.

The VSEC veterinarians specialize in treating dogs and cats, but Orsher said the new hospital — like the current facility — can also treat rabbits, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, birds and other small animals.

Orsher said he is confident the new hospital will do well despite the recession.

"I am very concerned about how the economy has affected pet owners," he said. "In late 2008 and early 2009, many families declined specialty and emergency care for their sick pets. This was a very emotional, trying time for them as well as our staff. (However) by late 2009 and now in 2010, we are seeing fewer people decline treatments for financial reasons."

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