

By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican Co-Publisher

Did you know Chase County Community Hospital represents a rarity when it comes to rural hospitals? Perhaps you didn't even realize it but CCCH operates without the tax support of Chase County residents. That's right—no local tax support.

That's what makes it a rare breed when it comes to rural hospitals in the state.

In November, the hospital board received the final audit for the 2008-09 fiscal year. For many, seeing the hospital turn a profit after coming off a big loss the year before represents the most important aspect of the report.

However, the fact the hospital was able to do this without any tax support makes this an even bigger deal in my mind.

The hospital's auditor said their firm audits more than 20 rural hospitals in the state. Of those, CCCH is one of only three that does not receive tax support to make the books balance.

Over the years, that's one thing the hospital staff and board have taken great pride in.

Our hospital has made great strides in the last seven years. The board has built a vision to insure that Chase County has the best offering of medical services available.

That vision has included a new clinic, remodeling of the specialty clinic areas and purchasing state-of-the-art equipment for radiology, lab and surgery departments.

A new digital mammography machine, that cost nearly \$300,000, represents one of the most recent investments. Now, women who have been seeking this service out of the area can have it done here. That's part of the board's vision—to make as many services as possible available right here without having to travel elsewhere.

The board's overall vision would not be complete without a full staff of great medical professionals who dedicate their lives to helping those in rural Nebraska.

With a full medical staff, the hospital's been able to reduce the use of locum tenens docs, which was a big factor in the financial loss suffered the previous fiscal year.

Over the past decade, the hospital and the board have been in the cross hairs and have taken considerable flak for some of their decisions. However, their perseverance has launched the hospital and its related entities on a path of success from which we all benefit.

We're fortunate to have medical personnel, medical facilities and a hospital we can boast about. Members of the hospital board deserve our thanks for accomplishing this without having to tap into your pocket for tax money. Not many rural hospitals can make that claim—but we can!

Our hospital stands ready to meet the challenges of the future through the vision, diligence and dedication of board members and staff who want the same thing you do—the best local health care possible.

Hats off to all who make Chase County's medical services a shining example of success.