



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## A Bright Future at Auburn Memorial Hospital

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO October 12, 2011

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Quality health care is the cornerstone of every thriving community and Cayuga County is no exception. Our own Auburn Memorial Hospital is a vital, thriving facility that provides over 80,000 residents of Cayuga County and the surrounding area with high quality health care services. Each time that I visit the hospital, I have continually been impressed with the pride and enthusiasm of the nurses, doctors, administrative staff and volunteers.

Now Auburn Memorial has launched a new chapter in its legacy of high quality service to the community. Recently, the hospital opened the Stardust Community Birthing Center, a new state-of-the art maternity wing for women to deliver their babies safely, comfortably and efficiently. The renovated maternity wing includes four spacious birthing suites and seven post-partum suites, as well as a pristine nurses' station, nursery, exam room, and private baths.

With so many exciting developments happening at Auburn Memorial, it is hard to believe that just a few years ago the future of the hospital was at serious risk. The maternity ward had been slated for closure at the recommendation of the Berger Commission on Health Care Facilities. With Auburn Memorial already facing mounting debt, this decision would have meant the certain closure of the entire hospital.

In the wake of the Commission's report, I immediately began working with the Board of Directors and staff at the hospital to address the financial challenges that needed to be overcome for Auburn Memorial to survive. After my meetings with hospital administrators, I worked with Assemblyman Gary Finch to secure \$5.5 million in the State budget and through the HEAL NY program to support the operational expenses and needed equipment updates at the hospital. In addition, I identified and secured a \$500,000.00 grant for the hospital to purchase a state-of-the-art digital mammography unit to serve the healthcare needs of local women throughout the area.

Thanks to this critical State funding, the outstanding leadership of Auburn Memorial President Scott Berlucchi, CFO Jack Baran and the work of the entire medical and

administrative staff, the hospital's finances have been turned around. The new Stardust Community Birthing Center is the result of much hard work and commitment. It builds upon the many accomplishments that we have achieved over the past five years in restoring the fiscal health of Auburn Memorial, which is critical to the health of the residents of the Central Finger Lakes.

The new maternity wing is named for the Stardust Foundation of Central New York, whose outstanding and generous contribution of \$1 million was critical in establishing the facility. I was pleased to work with Jack and Jerry Bisgrove and Guy Cosentino and of the Stardust Foundation to help transform the maternity program at Auburn Memorial.

In addition, I applaud the efforts of the local business and community leaders who came together to form a special Blueprint group to revitalize Cayuga County and the entire region. Keeping Auburn Memorial open and providing a full range of health care services has been a critical component of the Blueprint group's plan to bring jobs and economic growth to our region. Jack Bisgrove and Guy Cosentino are members of this group and have been critical in encouraging the private and public sectors to partner with Auburn Memorial Hospital, as has Peter Emerson of the Emerson Foundation, who helped raise the remainder of the funding needed to create the new Birthing Center.

With top quality physicians, a thriving midwifery program, a professional and caring nursing team and now a first-rate birthing facility, the future of Auburn Memorial's maternity program looks brighter than ever. It has been a pleasure to fight on the behalf of Cayuga County's residents to support Auburn Memorial Hospital and I am proud to say that our local hospital will be able to continue its legacy of quality service well into the future.