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# BUSINESS

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**GOOD MEDICINE**—West Penn Hospital President and CEO Duke Rupert touts ongoing service and facility improvements being made at the hospital during the April 20 PowerBreakfast meeting, as Doris Carson Williams looks on. (Photo by Christian Morrow)

## West Penn Hospital CEO at Chamber breakfast

by Christian Morrow  
Courier Staff Writer

West Penn Hospital President and CEO Duke Rupert had reason to celebrate as he addressed the African American Chamber of Commerce PowerBreakfast audience April 20 because the U.S. Department of Justice had just signed off on the merger between the West Penn Allegheny Health System and Highmark.

"They put out a lengthy statement saying it was a great idea—which they hardly ever do," he said. "And while we haven't cleared all the hurdles, we had amazing support during the state Insurance Commission hearings from the U.S. Steelworkers, state Sen. Jay Costa, Aggie Broz of Bloomfield Garfield Corp., so we're very hopeful."

Rupert then recapped the recent history of the hospital from the closing of its emergency room in late 2010 to its reopening as a full service community hospital on Valentine's Day.

"The hospital never really closed. We continued labor and delivery service, doing about 2,000 births, continued neo-natal in-

tensive care, and the burn unit—the only one in the county certified for children—and we still averaged about 100 people a day as in-patients," he said.

But the goals for the future are higher, and achieving them began with the remodeling of the facility that includes 18 new emergency treatment rooms, and new procedures to treat the 17 percent of ER patients who are non-emergent.

"We built in a fast track system to get those patients quicker attention, and schedule follow-up visits," he said. "That also frees up resources for more critical patients. This is about more than reopening a hospital. We're trying to develop systems to get people healthy and keep them that way. Because if they don't use the systems, there's no expense, and that can mean lower costs for everyone. We have an opportunity to set the bar for the country."

Rupert then gave a brief slide-show presentation showing the improvements to the facility beyond the emergency room, including new nurses stations, new floors, new walls, and technical improvements such as a "tele-stroke" system that allows for real-

time communication between the ER and the Neurological staff at Allegheny General to determine if patients need to be transferred.

"We have 292 beds and we're shooting for 350—all private. Our critical care unit is open and we project the critical vascular unit to be open in August," he said. "And we have a committed staff and physicians all making this happen."

Rupert said there would be opportunities for chamber members to deliver services and products to West Penn as the renovation continues and beyond. Chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams said she would set up a meeting specifically on doing business with the hospital.

She thanked Rupert for the hospital's assistance with the Chamber's Diabetes Workshop Series, and reminded members that the next session on foot care is scheduled for May 21. She also reminded members of the chamber mixer with PJ Dick April 24, and the Annual Meeting at the Omni William Penn, May 10, with keynote speaker Robert Oeler, president and CEO of Dollar Bank.