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Edgerton Hospital aided by local boy

By Mark Scarborough
Reporter Staff

In December 2010, a nine-year-old Rock County town of Fulton boy saw a movie on TV and got the idea that one person, even someone very small, could make a positive difference in his community.

And that's just what little John Straub did last year for the Edgerton Hospital and Health Services project, now under construction at Highway 59 and Sherman Road.

An 18-bed facility expected to measure 52,400 square feet, the new \$26 million hospital is being built on 70 acres of land on Edgerton's far east side. The hospital is expected to open this fall.

Work on the hospital building, which started in May 2010, is now 52

percent complete, according to Bonnie Robinson, executive director of the Edgerton Hospital Capital Foundation.

Although an April 2010 U.S. Housing and Urban Development loan secured overall funding for the hospital, allowing construction to proceed, the hospital's capital foundation must raise \$1 million to complete financing for the project.

Late last year, Edgerton native and world-ranked golfer Steve Stricker gave the effort a strong boost by contributing \$100,000 toward this fund-raising goal.

Now young Mr. Straub has given the project yet another boost, with a gift almost as sweet (for different reasons) as the Stricker donation.

At Christmas time, John watched the 1992 Chris Columbus flick,

"Home Alone II: Lost in New York." The Edgerton Community Elementary School third-grader was so taken with the film's sub-plot – involving a toy store owner trying to raise money for a New York hospital – that John decided to do the same thing in his own backyard.

"I got the idea from a movie and I thought it would be kind of nice to give to the hospital," said John at his 11827 Heritage Ridge Road home on Jan. 28.

The only child of Ann and Mark Straub, John went door to door in his neighborhood, asking for donations for the Edgerton hospital. John's solicitation campaign, which included a contribution from himself, brought in \$42.

The boy was a little surprised at his neighbors' generosity, but he knew people would give if they understood they could make a true difference.

John's low-key sales pitch was simple, yet effective. "If the hospital gets money, they get medicine and stuff," he said. To every person who gave a contribution to the cause, John gave back a candy cane.

John's mother was very proud of her son, but not surprised at what he did.

"He's a very caring kid," Ann Straub said about the boy, who is studying for his black belt in karate, loves to play Mario Brothers and Club Penguin video games, and is fascinated with ancient Egypt, exploring, museums and archeology.

"I'm very grateful to have a child

who would come up with something like this," Ann Straub said. "Hopefully, he will remember this for a long time and he will continue to care for other people who may not be as fortunate as he is.

"It was nice that he could see the need and do something real to make it happen. For a nine-year-old boy to do something like this is pretty special."

John's collected cash – which arrived at the hospital on Christmas Eve in an envelope with a neatly printed "\$42" on the front of it – was "perhaps, one of the most heart-felt donations" received by the hospital so far, hospital officials noted in a press release.

"Dear Hospital," John wrote in a note inside the envelope. "Please give this money to the sick patients. I do not need anything in return. Merry Christmas!!!"

Edgerton Hospital Chief Executive Officer Jim Pernau was proud to accept John's donation. "This little boy knows the meaning of generosity and I could see in his eyes that he was very proud of his efforts," Pernau said. "Having the support of our community members, means the world to the team at Edgerton Hospital."

On Jan. 21, Pernau gave John and his parents a tour of the new hospital site.

"John was so excited to visit the new hospital and see what his money was going towards," his mother said. "Making a difference in the lives of others is so rewarding, and I feel so



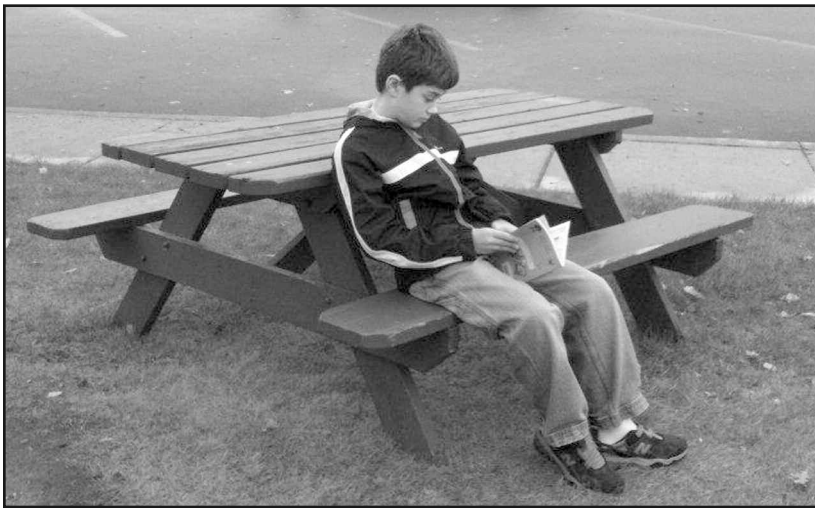
Young philanthropist John Straub is shown during his recent tour of the new Edgerton Hospital site.

blessed that my son has been able to experience this firsthand."

Ann Straub was impressed with some of the "green" plans for the new hospital, especially planned gardens and walking trails. "I think Edgerton needs this," John's mother said about the new hospital. "I think it will be really good for our community."

Affiliated with SSM Health Care of Wisconsin, the Edgerton hospital is a critical access facility that serves the communities of Edgerton, Milton and surrounding areas.

Founded in 1923, the hospital offers inpatient, outpatient, surgical, diagnostic, emergency, urgent care and rehabilitation services.



John Straub at the Edgerton Book and Film Festival last October.