

## Profile: Quillen helps bring health care to East Mesa

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LAS CRUCES — Suzanne Quillen has seen the health care industry in Las Cruces grow.

As the CEO of the Advanced Care Hospital of Southern New Mexico, Quillen was on hand as the medical care facility broke ground, put up its walls and opened its doors. In fact, July marked the one-year anniversary of the first patient to be admitted to the hospital at 4451 E. Lohman Ave. It is located near the Rehabilitation Hospital of Southern New Mexico, which is owned by the same parent company, Ernest Health Inc.

The facility is also near MountainView Regional Medical Center and not far from Memorial Medical Center.

"It's a 20-bed, long-term acute care hospital," she said. "MountainView and Memorial would be considered short-term acute care. We take patients that haven't progressed through the normal recovery period in the short-term acute care hospitals.

"In this facility, we have to count on the support of hospitals in central New Mexico, southeastern New Mexico and west El Paso," she said.

Quillen's work to open the doors on the place, though, was not the first time she helped bring a hospital into existence. She worked closely with John Hummer in the area of marketing and business development as MountainView Medical Center was constructed in Las Cruces earlier this decade.

When she first arrived in southern New Mexico's largest city in 1994, the area that now has three hospitals — East Lohman Avenue — was just a desert landscape.

"There was nothing behind the Hilton," she said of the hotel that is now Hotel Encanto, located at 705 S. Telshor Blvd. "Even when we worked on the development for MountainView, there wasn't much. Sonoma Ranch was just starting."

She said that work was invaluable.

"It was a great experience being involved from the ground up," she said. "It certainly prepared me for this opportunity."

A native of Oklahoma City, Okla., Quillen came to Las Cruces after earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in nursing at the University of Oklahoma, the University of Albuquerque — which is now closed — and the University of Colorado.

She worked as chief operating officer at Lovelace Medical Center in Albuquerque before she moved to Las Cruces in 1994. In Las Cruces she worked as a nurse practitioner and taught and eventually earned a degree in public administration at New Mexico State University.

She said she heard in 2006 that Ernest Health planned to build another facility in Las Cruces, so she paid a visit to Tony Hernandez, CEO of the rehab hospital.

"I called Tony and we met for coffee and we talked about what the plans were," she said.

From there she met with Darby Brockette, president and CEO of Ernest Health.

"I was so impressed with the company," she said.

The Advanced Care Hospital has a staff of more than 70.

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