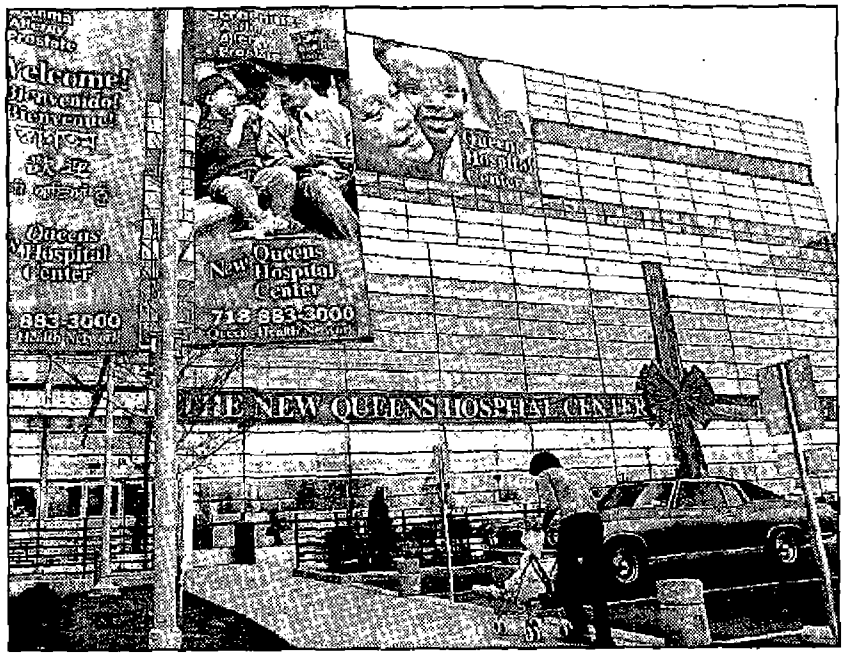
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The new Queens Hospital Center on 164th Street in Jamaica opened yesterday. The 200-bed facility plans to bring better care to underserved communities.

Newsday Photo / Ken Sawchuk

New Hospital Opens, Gives Borough a Boost

By Margaret Ramirez
STAFF WRITER

Adorned with a big red bow, the new $149-million Queens Hospital Center opened yesterday, a modern medical facility designed to bring advanced care to underserved communities.

The long-awaited 200-bed building on 164th Street between Grand Central Parkway and Goethals Avenue in Jamaica was praised at its dedication by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Borough President Claire Shulman as "the greatest gift imaginable" for Queens.

The seven-story city Health and Hospitals Corp. facility boasts spacious patient rooms, more than $20 million in medical equipment and three specialized centers of care for cancer, diabetes and women's health.

Dr. Margaret Kemeny, director of the cancer center, said the revamped facility will be able to conduct research trials and bring better treatment to the borough.

"With this new center, we will be able to raise consciousness and maybe save thousands of lives," she said.

Shulman, a former nurse at Queens Hospital, had fought for almost 10 years to rebuild the facility. After winning support from Giuliani, construction began in 1997 and the new hospital was completed shortly before the World Trade Center attack.

"I can't believe we're here," Shulman said in the sun-drenched hospital atrium. "This is a state-of-the-art hospital for everyone, from the wealthiest to the poorest."

The project was built amid criticism from members of the hospital advisory board who said 200 beds would not adequately serve Jamaica, St. Albans and Laurelton. The old facility had 303 beds.

Richard Roberts, chairman of HHC's board of directors, said modernization is necessary for city hospitals to survive in a post-Sept. 11 world redefined by budget constraints.

"This is the type of facility that permits us to remain competitive . . . " he said. "It gives the ability to attract our fair share of patients."

Dr. Luis Marcos, HHC president, agreed, saying: "People have this notion of public hospitals being old and dirty. . . . This is an example of the new public hospital system."

Since Sept. 11, New York hospitals have lost $340 million as a result of reduced revenue and expenses from the attacks, as well as a decrease in patient admissions. HHC, which runs 11 public hospitals, lost $27.4 million. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has allocated $30 million in emergency grants to New York hospitals.

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