

# 75 Years of Caring

- Celebrating 75 Years over 75 Days •

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**CHAPTER 50** - In 1968, the Sisters continued their collaboration with the State Mental Health Services.

Together with the state, they opened a mental health service facility in Southern Nevada. Their goal was to develop something that offered more than the temporary holding facility the state had in Northern Nevada. The unit, under the guidance of Sister Marie Brigid, could accommodate twenty patients in a home-like setting.

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**CHAPTER 51** - In 1972, the Adrian Dominican Sisters, having met their twenty-five year commitment to the community as outlined in their 1947 agreement with the government, received the final deed to Rose de Lima.

In 1974, the word "Saint" was added to the Rose de Lima hospital's name. The word was originally omitted from the name so non-Catholics would feel welcome turning to the hospital for care. After 27 years as Rose de Lima, the hospital became St. Rose de Lima Hospital.

The hospital's name would receive another revision in 1989, becoming St. Rose Dominican Hospital as a way to recognize the Dominican spirit of the hospital and the Adrian Dominican Sisters.

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**CHAPTER 52** - The 1970s saw many Sisters hanging up their traditional habits in favor of the more mainstream business attire worn by lay professionals.

The more vital change, however, was that Adrian Dominican Sisters began to live and work among the greater public.

“Doing so gave us a great advantage,” said Sister Michael Thomas Watson. “We are more in touch with God’s people and more aware of their individual ministries. As such, our purpose is to be present to them in order to help them fulfill their calling to be compassionate caregivers.”

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Sister Molly



Sister Michael



Sister Monica

**CHAPTER 53** - While Henderson and Las Vegas continued to grow, and St. Rose Dominican Hospitals along with them, the original mission of the St. Rose our ministry remained unchanged.

Originally, the Sisters spent countless hours nursing the medical, emotional and spiritual needs of patients. By the late 1970s, the hospital had grown to employ many lay nurses.

Sisters such as Veronica Gonthier, Sister Catherine Ann Burke and Sister Mary Assenbacher were able to focus on the spiritual side of the hospital's services. Although they were small in number, their staff had an immeasurable influence on St. Rose employees, patients and their loved ones.



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**CHAPTER 54** - Sister Veronica Gonthier was the founder of St. Rose's Pastoral Care Department. She had an intimate appreciation for the physical afflictions of others as she herself suffered from severe rheumatoid arthritis. She also understood the spiritual needs of patients and their loved ones.

One evening Sister Veronica was called as an elderly man was going into emergency surgery. His wife was frail and anxious. Sister sat with her throughout the night until after sunrise when he had been moved to the ICU.

Perioperative Director Nancy Willets remembered, "Sister Veronica was still there. It touched my heart. She was not well, yet she stayed by the woman's side the entire night without reservation. She put her faith in God and put everyone else's needs before her own."

Sister Veronica was admitted to the ICU that same morning. When asked why she had concealed her own ailments, Sister Veronica said, "I told someone and He helped me by giving me the strength I needed."

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**CHAPTER 55** - One of the most critical decisions the Adrian Dominican Sisters made in the 1980s was to join with Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), an organization founded in 1986 when the Sisters of Mercy Burlingame and the Sisters of Mercy Auburn merged their California healthcare ministries.

The Adrian Dominicans became cosponsors of CHW, believing the collaboration would enhance their charitable capabilities, expand the Catholic healthcare ministry, and promote social justice. The union of ministries made CHW the largest California-based healthcare system and the fourteenth largest in the nation among nonprofits.

The rapid growth in southern Nevada, prompted CHW to invest in the growth of St. Rose Dominican which allowed St. Rose de Lima hospital to move forward with a \$20 million expansion and a new four-story patient tower.

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**CHAPTER 56** - May 4, 1988, was a tragic day in Henderson history when a fire ignited in the PEPCON plant at the BMI facility. The fire set off a series of explosions that destroyed PEPCON and the adjacent Kidd Marshmallow plant.

The blast shattered windows at St. Rose and damaged homes and businesses throughout Henderson and across the Las Vegas Valley. The concussion from the explosions was heard and felt throughout the valley and as far as Boulder City and North Las Vegas.

More than 100 PEPCON plant employees were on duty at the time of the explosions. All but two escaped the blaze, with the injured transported for treatment at St. Rose de Lima Hospital.

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**CHAPTER 57** - The PEPCON tragedy deeply affected the community and provided new appreciation for Rose de Lima hospital's role in the community's well-being.

In an editorial, the Las Vegas Sun wrote, "Southern Nevada learned a lesson in divine mercy Wednesday as an industrial fire and explosion caused widespread injuries in Henderson. Those suffering in the devastation found a haven at St. Rose de Lima Hospital. Most Southern Nevada residents and visitors don't give St. Rose a second thought during day-to-day tragedies. Babies are born there, the ill and the injured seek its special brand of healing. Henderson's wrenching thrust into the national spotlight was softened by the care provided by its own hospital. ...If anyone needs further proof of why St. Rose should stay open, this week said it all."



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**CHAPTER 58** - On June 22, 1991, a standing-room-only crowd joined the Sisters and staff as Bishop Daniel Walsh performed a dedication blessing for the new four-story tower at Rose de Lima Hospital.

Guests included former U.S. Senator Howard Cannon, Catholic Health West representatives, and other community leaders. Among them, a former reporter turned Henderson Mayor, Lorna Kesterson, who had previously written articles about the Sisters and given birth to her children at the hospital years before.

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*"St. Rose Dominican Hospitals is more than acute-care facilities that provide excellent care. We are a living legacy – a culture of quality, compassionate caring, of dedicated community service and of enduring core values of dignity, justice, collaboration, stewardship and excellence."*



Rod A. Davis  
President & CEO  
St. Rose Dominican Hospitals  
1991 - 2014

**CHAPTER 59** - The Adrian Dominican Sisters have said that no one tells the story of their southern Nevada journey better than Rod Davis.

On December 2, 1991, Rod Davis assumed the role as the president and CEO of St. Rose Dominican Hospitals. His leadership in that role was instrumental during critical growth years of our community and our organization's ministry.

Sister Marge Mehigan said, "He has always been open and eager to absorb and to integrate our mission. I believe Rod's own missionary background with The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-day Saints was beneficial to his role here. His mission readiness is part of who he is and what he brings to St. Rose."

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**CHAPTER 60** - In 1998, St. Rose embarked on a new mission that accentuated the feminine spirit of the hospital by serving the healthcare decision makers of America's households – women.

Through a generous \$3 million donation from the Greenspun Family Foundation St. Rose Dominican Hospital opened The Barbara Greenspun WomensCare Center of Excellence, created to address women's wellness needs.

Holly Lyman, selected to lead this new endeavor, said, "St. Rose realized that women were facing mounting challenges with the increasing demands of work, rearing children and often caring for aging parents. With less and less time to give to their own needs, the qualities of many women's health and lifestyles were being compromised."

Today there are six centers across southern Nevada, with plans for a seventh underway. Together, they continue to serve the needs of women, seniors, expecting mothers, new parents, and others.

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**CHAPTER 61** - June 27, 1997 – The fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the original seven Sisters was the date selected to announce plans to build a second St. Rose Dominican Hospital in Henderson. The \$185 million, acute care facility would be called the Siena Campus.

Twelve months later, Sisters donned hard hats alongside Bishop Daniel Walsh and Mayor Jim Gibson to break ground on the project. Henderson Mayor Jim Gibson said, “The news sent a wave of excitement through the community. Henderson’s growth had been tremendous, but now we had an anchor for the western half of our city. It brought businesses and homebuilders. The area took shape almost overnight.”

St. Rose Dominican president Rod Davis said this project would be more than a second acute care medical facility. “It was our opportunity to develop a true environment of healing, to express our core values and to build on the Sisters’ belief that healthcare must attend to the physical, emotional and spiritual health and dignity of each individual.”



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**CHAPTER 62** - The second campus of St. Rose Dominican Hospitals was dedicated to Saint Catherine of Siena. Originally Caterina Benincasa, Catherine of Siena was born in Siena, Italy, on March 25, 1347, to a family of modest means.

A remarkable healer, she worked tirelessly to restore the health of those stricken with the plague, which was rampant during her ministry. With great humility and tenderness, she personally prepared and buried the bodies of those she could not save.

Her joyful disposition brought comfort to those around her. With equal regard for all God's children, she was known to visit prisoners sentenced to death in an effort to convince them to make peace with their Maker. Her innate gift of fairness led many leaders to seek her help in mediating conflicts.

Catherine died on April 29, 1380, was canonized by Pope Pius II in 1461, and in 1939, Pope Pius XII named her Co-Patroness of Italy. In 1970, Pope Paul VI declared her a Doctor of the Church meaning her teachings are considered relevant for the whole church and for all time. She is only one of three women who hold that title.

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**CHAPTER 63** - When Sister Monica Stankus joined St. Rose in 1999 it was a remarkable homecoming.

A southern Nevada native, she had worked as a laboratory technologist at Rose de Lima hospital after graduating college. However, it was not until she herself was hospitalized that she felt the calling to join the Adrian Dominican Order.

"The Sisters would come and sit and chat with me during my week or so in the hospital," she said. Those conversations changed her life's direction. She became the first and only St. Rose employee to take the vows of an Adrian Dominican Sister.

Nearly 40 years would pass from the time Sister Monica entered the convent to the time she would receive her assignment to return to work at the Rose de Lima Campus.

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**CHAPTER 64** - On Friday, June 23, 2000, the newly completed Siena Campus was dedicated and debuted to the community.

More than 800 public officials, clergy and friends of St. Rose were present as Monsignor Patrick Leary blessed the front doors of the Siena Campus.

Over two days, more than 10,000 neighbors previewed the new hospital. before State inspectors toured the hospital and provided St. Rose Dominican Hospitals an official certificate of occupancy.

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**CHAPTER 65** - On July 17, 2000, the Siena Campus officially opened its 29-bed Emergency Department and 72 of its 141 patient rooms. With the opening this second campus, the hospital system was renamed St. Rose Dominican Hospitals.

Within its first ten minutes of operation, a heart attack victim arrived in the Siena Campus Emergency Department. By the end of its first six months, more than 7,500 patients had been admitted, and 1,305 babies had been delivered at the Siena Campus.

On January 2, 2001, the St. Rose Dominican Hospitals' Open Heart program received State approvals and performed its first open heart procedure at the Siena Campus.



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**CHAPTER 66** - The Siena Bell Tower is a familiar sight to southern Nevadans, but most don't realize there's a story behind the cross that stands atop our Siena Campus.

The 6-foot tall, 75-pound cross was lifted atop the 90-foot bell tower, during the hospital's 1999 topping-out ceremony. Made of pure titanium, it was fashioned here in Henderson by long-time TIMET employee Ray Martinez.

The cross was a gift from the TIMET Corporation symbolizing the then 50-year relationship between TIMET, St. Rose Dominican, and the City of Henderson. TIMET operations in Henderson began in 1950, just a few years after the original Adrian Dominican Sisters arrived in 1947.

This incredible gesture of friendship and community was repeated on February 10, 2004, when TIMET donated a second titanium cross that stands atop the San Martín Campus bell tower.

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**CHECKING UP** - David Coats and Sister Robert Joseph turn the stethoscopes over to Nikki Motis, left, and Kristen Campbell in a St. Rose De Lima Hospital program to teach youngsters about medical treatment. "Little Buckaroos" program, aimed at assuring children a hospital visit needn't be frightening, runs through Friday.

Gary Thompson/Review



**CHAPTER 67** - Sister Robert Joseph Bailey was a soft-spoken, wisp of a woman, with a big heart and big ideas that became the backbone of St. Rose Dominican Hospitals' community outreach efforts, focusing on the well-being of children and senior citizens.

Sister Robert Joseph taught at St. Peter's Elementary where she launched the Positive Impact on Reading program, which helped children who struggled with reading. Pairing students with volunteers, many of them seniors, each gained a sense of success. The program helped Robert L. Taylor Elementary become the 2005 National Champions in the Reading is Fundamental Community Reading Challenge.

Many remember the times Sister Robert and her hospital posse dressed up in western duds for Buckaroo Days, the fun-filled, informative field trips developed to alleviate children's anxieties about hospitals.

Sister Robert Joseph's constant dedication to children led the Clark County School District to name an elementary school in her honor in 2006.

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**CHAPTER 68** - November 12, 2001, was a day of both the expected and the unexpected. With the runaway success of the Siena Campus, the announcement of a \$20 million dollar, 66-bed expansion of the Siena Campus' was expected by the media and the community.

The unexpected came when in the same announcement St. Rose Dominican Hospitals president Rod Davis announced the fast-track of future St. Rose Dominican expansion and the mission's third acute care hospital to be built in southwest Las Vegas.

The announcement of what would become the San Martin Campus was heralded by local medical professionals telling southern Nevada media outlets that the news came not a moment too soon due to the valley's shortage of hospital beds.

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ENGELSTAD FOUNDATION  
**R.E.D. ROSE**  
PROGRAM

**CHAPTER 69** - In 2004, the R.E.D. Rose program was created to provide free breast exams, mammograms, ultrasounds, surgical consultations and biopsies for women who are uninsured or underinsured.

R.E.D. stands for Responsible Early Detection and emphasizes the importance for every woman to have access to these regular exams. In addition to providing mammograms and other medical treatment, support services such as transportation to doctor appointments, counseling, childcare and domestic assistance can also be provided.

In 2018, the program received a transformational \$10 million donation from the Las Vegas-based Engelstad Foundation to carry on this important work. The program was re-dedicated as the Engelstad Foundation R.E.D Rose Program.



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*On February 10, 2004, following a blessing from Bishop Pepe, ground was broken for the new San Martín Campus. This third St. Rose Dominican campus was dedicated to St. Martin de Porres.*



**CHAPTER 70** - Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru, in 1579, to Don Juan de Porres, a Spanish Knight, and Anna Velasquez, a freed woman from Panama of African descent.

Early in his life, Martin apprenticed with a surgeon-barber where he learned about medicine and caring for the sick. At the age of 24, he was the first person of African descent to receive the habit of a Dominican lay Brother. He was assigned to the monastery infirmary where he provided physical and spiritual care to the sick and poor, including slaves. He was a personal friend and counselor to Rose de Lima in the 1600s.

St. Martín maintained an animal hospital and established an orphanage and hospital for poor children. He served the people of Lima until his death in 1639 at the age of 60.

Martin de Porres was canonized in 1962 by Pope John XXIII, becoming the first saint of African descent.

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**CHAPTER 71** - November 2006 - St. Rose Dominican Hospitals opened its third acute-care facility, the San Martín Campus in southwest Las Vegas. The first phase of the four-floor hospital opens with 111 beds, a three-story medical office building and shelled space for an additional 90 beds.

Governor Kenny Guinn was present for the hospital dedication and praised St. Rose Dominican for its enduring commitment to healthcare excellence and to its kind hearted care for the community.

Bishop Pepe presided over the blessing and a flock of doves were released into the Las Vegas sky representing God's promise to take care of all his people.

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**CHAPTER 72** - 2007 was a busy year for St. Rose Dominican Hospitals:

- The Rose de Lima Campus celebrated its 60th anniversary with year-long festivities and a formal rededication ceremony. (View our [60th Anniversary book on the Henderson Libraries Digital Archive.](#))
- Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Units opened at both the Rose de Lima and San Martín Campuses.
- The Open Heart Surgery Center opened at the San Martín Campus.
- The Siena Campus acquired the CHW system's first da Vinci® Robotic Surgical System.

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**CHAPTER 73** - 2015: The Siena Campus opened the Dominican Tower, doubling the capacity of the Emergency Department, adding 100 in-patient beds, and six new surgical suites.

2016: Dignity Health-St. Rose Dominican announces plans to build multiple small neighborhood hospitals in underserved areas of southern Nevada with partner Emerus. Four of these Neighborhood Hospitals would open in 2017.

2017: Dignity Health and Catholic Health Initiatives combine ministries and create a new, nonprofit Catholic health system providing services in 28 states. The new entity would become CommonSpirit Health.

2018: The Siena and San Martin Campuses harness clean, renewable energy with the installation of solar panels over more than 1,000 parking spaces between the two hospitals, offsetting the environmental impact of more than 1,000 cars each year.



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**CHAPTER 74** - 2019: The 60-bed Dignity Health Rehabilitation Hospital opens on the Siena Campus, uniting Select Medical's highly regarded medical rehabilitation expertise with Dignity Health's world-class, compassionate clinical care. The new facility brings a new level of specialized rehabilitation to southern Nevada, providing services to help patients recovering from stroke, traumatic brain injury, amputation, spinal cord injury.

2019: Rose de Lima Campus completes a two-year transition to a small hospital, maintaining St. Rose Dominican's original commitment to the community, while adjusting services to meet the needs of the area. The transformed Rose de Lima Campus maintains a 24-hour Emergency Department and 10-bed in-patient facility. It is also home to more than 100 market employees.

2021 Siena and San Martin become the only Nevada hospitals to achieve certification as Centers of Excellence in Robotic Surgery

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**CHAPTER 75** - June 27, 2022 - Dignity Health-St. Rose Dominican celebrates the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the original seven Adrian Dominican Sisters who traveled by train from Michigan to operate St. Rose Dominican Hospital in Henderson.

Their mission and ministry still lives today through the compassionate care of the thousands of medical professionals and staff who work every day at Dignity Health-St. Rose Dominican facilities throughout southern Nevada.