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WILLIAMSTOWN — North Adams Regional Hospital may be small, but it offers state-of-the-art technology — not "yesterday's technology" — to help keep the community healthy, says Northern Berkshire Healthcare's new president and chief executive officer.

For example, a TeleStroke video-conference unit allows stroke victims to communicate with stroke specialists at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and participation in the state's eHealth Collaborative is improving communication between doctors by providing access to electronic medical records, Richard Palmisano told the 220-member audience at the Berkshire County Chamber of Commerce's Good Business Salute Breakfast on Wednesday.

The salutes are held to applaud the successes of selected area businesses.

In his half-hour PowerPoint demonstration at the Williams Inn, Palmisano, the keynote speaker, said the hospital has added 10 new members to the medical staff, including two physicians certified to treat both adults and children.

New hires means budgeting more salaries, however, and Palmisano said pay increases always challenge hospital budget managers who seem to have less and less wiggle room. But the costs are less than half of those at other hospitals.

Hospital payroll and benefit expenses increased by 9.5 percent statewide last year, but only by 4.3 percent at North Adams Regional, he said. Total expenses increased statewide by 8 percent, and only by 3.6 percent in North Adams. Palmisano said the hospital has \$75 million in annual expenditures and has remained mostly under budget in the past two years.

"I know that the care delivered at North Adams Regional is quality care," said Palmisano.

Other businesses saluted included Absolutely Experiential Inc., which sells, installs and services climbing-wall towers and adventure-challenge courses. The full-time staff of four manages the 2-year-old business in Pittsfield. It services challenge courses as far away as New York and even Nebraska.

The chamber saluted Adams Cooperative Bank for its 110th anniversary and its many years of high-quality service. Excelsior Printing Co. traced its roots even further, however, technically beginning with the founding of the Crane Paper Co. in 1775. The North Adams-based company received a salute for continuing growth.

Berkshire Family and Individual Resources accepted a salute for achievements such as aiding 18 people with disabilities find employment. The chamber also tipped its hat in a community recognition of the Transportation Association of Northern Berkshire. The transport company helps people without access to cars commute to work.

David Bissaillon, president and CEO of the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, said it was a privilege to recognize the businesses of Berkshire County.

"They're very diverse, but all play a very important role in our economy," he said.

As for the state of the Berkshire economy, master of ceremonies Donald Dubendorf, an attorney, said it is time for residents to take charge of the future of the area. He said the population is aging and shrinking and Berkshire County lies at the "long end of the supply line," in terms of energy.

"We say we're victims. Victims of geography, victims of history ... and that's a destructive temperament," said Dubendorf. "We can change our future."