

**LRGH from page 5**

lowed through. Elliott Health System in Manchester and Southern New Hampshire Medical Center in Nashua instead announced layoffs of hundreds of employees.

Clairmont said LRGHealthcare had already trimmed its staff by about 100 employees through attrition and consolidation over the past three years – “we just can’t keep doing this,” he said. The hospital is also nearing completion on a 97,000-square-foot expansion that will allow each patient to have a private room.

“We are saddened to have to take this action but, regrettably, have no choice,” read a public notice to Medicaid patients posted in the *Laconia Daily Sun* on Tuesday. “We intend to assist all patients in making a smooth transition of their records.”

But Lynch said the state has not reduced its Medicaid reimbursement rate for physician services this year, despite LRGHealthcare’s claim that a drop in reimbursement rates necessitated shutting off access to primary care. The Legislature did cut \$250 million in funding to the disproportionate share program for hospitals statewide, though Franklin Regional Hospital – which is run by LRGHealthcare – was exempted from that reduction.

“Given LRGH’s decision to walk away from a large part of its nonprofit mission, I think it would be appropriate for the attorney general to review whether LRGHealthcare, and its associated primary care practices, still warrant nonprofit status,” Lynch said.

Medicaid recipients will still be able to receive emergency room care at Lakes Region General Hospital and Franklin Regional Hospital, though wait times could be lengthy due to an influx of patients. Children and teens covered by New Hampshire Healthy Kids and those receiving prenatal services at Caring for Women will continue to receive primary care.

Additionally, four primary loca-

tions in the LRGHealthcare network will continue to see Medicaid patients: Newfound Family Practice, Westside Healthcare in Franklin, and Health First Family Care Center in Laconia and Franklin. Because the former two are rural health centers and the Health First locations are considered federal-qualified health centers, they are reimbursed at cost for providing Medicaid services, said Richard Silverberg, executive director at Health First.

Silverberg said in the past two days Health First signed up 125 new Medicaid patients. The centers have the physical space and equipment to take on 300 to 350 patients, Silverberg said, and he is seeking out additional medical providers to join the practice and take on even more patients.

“I think over the next six months it’ll all sort of work itself out,” he said of other practices taking on the displaced Medicaid patients.

Shannon Stottlar, a 30-year-old Medicaid recipient from Barnstead, said she received her letter Saturday. Stottlar, who recently got a job booking appointments for a cardiologist, said she has been seeing her doctor at Lakes Region Family Practice for at least five years as she struggles with clinical depression and insomnia. The other options are “very far away. I’m not really sure what I’m going to do.”

“You don’t push someone who can’t swim into the deep end of the pool,” Stottlar said. “I’m not on this because I want to be.”

Stottlar said her 8-year-old son will continue to receive primary care under New Hampshire Healthy Kids. But she said she isn’t feeling comfortable about the prospect of switching to a new provider.

“It just makes you feel really helpless,” Stottlar said. “There are people who can barely afford to live who need this care.”

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Excavation and processing started last month in the Town’s new sand pit near the junction of Routes 3 and 4 east of town. Photo: Charlie Darling

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