



On April 18, 1997, the unthinkable happened. Dikes were breached, the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks covered with water. Residents of both communities evacuated their homes and businesses. From that Friday through the afternoon of Sunday, April

20, 368 patients were successfully evacuated from Medical Park. With the help of the National Guard and the Air Force, patients were flown to facilities all over our region; there was no loss of life or injury to any patient during evacuation. Over 440 outpatients were transferred to other services. These outpatients included people on dialysis, home infusion therapy, chemotherapy, respiratory therapy, and home care. Their care had to be continued and we saw to it that it did continue.

With the population of Greater Grand Forks scattered, physicians, professional staff, and support staff volunteered their services wherever they were needed. Two operating rooms were set up at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, including an open heart room.

*For the citizens of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, the spring and summer of 1997 was a time of profound change. Although our communities suffered incredible loss, it was also a time of immeasurable gain; neighbors helping neighbors, a people brought close together through tragedy. And on July 1, 1997, United Health Services and Grand Forks Clinic officially committed to working together to improve healthcare in northeastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota by becoming one: Altru Health System.*

The hospital and clinic supplied personal care items to thousands of people in shelters. Healthcare did not disappear in the valley, it relocated. Grand Forks physicians and nurses provided care for patients in branch clinics throughout the region. From April 18 until the hospital opened on May 8 and the clinic opened May 12, clinic and hospital employees worked together as if formal integration had already taken place.