

Rustic Flair for Urgent Care

A model home finds new life as a state-of-the-art urgent-care center and family practice in the mountains of North Carolina.

Everyone knows that a log home can make you feel warm and cozy, but when it comes to feeling better when you're sick, one log home in North Carolina has them all beat. When the downturn in the economy forced a log-home business owner to sell his beloved model home, a local hospital bought the property and turned it into an urgent-care center and family practice capable of serving thousands of local patients each year.

Bob Colabella, president of New Horizon Log Homes Inc., an independent distributor for Jim Barna Log and Timber Homes, had been working in the log-home industry for nearly 15 years by the time he was able to build his model home in Murphy, North Carolina, a small mountain town

of 1,500 in the Nantahala National Forest. Finding the ideal property near two of the town's most heavily traveled highways, Colabella established his business' storefront in 2005 when the economy was riding high. But by 2008, after the recession had hit and business had fallen off, he decided to sell.

The home hadn't been on the market long before news of its availability reached Mike Stevenson, CEO administrator of Murphy Medical Center, who saw the "For Sale" sign on the side of the road. Within a few short weeks of listing the property, Colabella received a call from Stevenson asking if he might come by to take a look.

"I had a hunch about what he was hoping to do," says Colabella, noting that the hospital's urgent-care center was



operating out of a cramped, outdated, doublewide trailer at the time. "When he walked through the front door, he just gazed and said, 'Bob, I don't know if it will work, but I like it.'"

The building and location turned out to perfectly fit the needs of the hospital, which had been looking for a new location for its urgent-care center for more than a year. The land adjacent to the log home allowed for plenty of parking space, and the building's location near the town's two major highways made it convenient for potential patients. The aesthetic value of a comfortable log home also played heavily into the considerations, and within three months of Stevenson's visit, the hospital had settled on the property.

Although he hated to part with the building he brought to life, Colabella was pleased that it would be used to create a much-needed facility that would serve the community. Aside from moving its urgent-care center to the new location, the hospital decided to expand on the original structure and add a family practice, working with Dechant Architecture and Wells & West contractors to build a 4,641-square-foot addition onto the 2,842-square-foot log home. In order to comply with building regulations for medical facilities, the builders installed half-log siding on the exterior of the addition and built the inside to reflect a more conventional doctor's office. The waiting and reception areas were established in the original structure, however, so patients would be surrounded by homey log walls while they waited.



After purchasing the property, Murphy Medical Center nearly tripled the size of the formerly modest model home. The new wing (above) features log siding and a conventionally constructed interior, though full log walls are still present in the waiting room (top).

Construction crews broke ground in July 2009, and the facility opened for business March 30, 2010. So far, it's been a big hit for medical employees and patients alike.

"One woman came to our grand opening and told me, 'You've got that trailer beat by a long shot!'" says Kathi Osborne, foundation director for the hospital. "The response has been overwhelmingly positive."

And as for Bob Colabella? "I just had to bring my wife there, and the service was excellent," he reports. "As soon as patients walk through the front door, they feel better." **CBC**



Photos courtesy of Bob Colabella



ONLINE GIVEAWAY

Originally used as sales aids and product incentives around the turn of the century, salesman sample, or miniature, canoes have become popular collectibles. Original salesman samples from companies such as Old Town Canoe Co., Kennebec Canoe and Boat Co., and Peterborough Canoe Co. are very rare, often fetching four-digit figures at auction.

Winnepesaukee Canoe Co. and Cottage Surroundings now offer 5-foot reproduction salesman sample canoes, made in the USA using bent wood ribs, wood planking and copper tacks — perfect for adding a little outdoorsman quality to your interior decor at an affordable price. Enter online to win one of these wooden beauties at countrysbestcabins.com/contest. Contest ends Oct. 7.

