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LOCAL

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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Men send hospital \$2.5 million thank-you

A former cancer patient and his son will give St. Joseph its largest donation.

BY COURTNEY PERKES
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Soon after Ernie Townsend finished colon-cancer treatment at St. Joseph Hospital, he donated \$5,000.

But the more he thought about his ordeal, the kindness of his doctors and nurses and families like his own, the more checks he started writing.

Townsend and his son, Josh, who co-own an Anaheim Hills Land Rover-Jaguar deal-

ership, are giving the hospital \$2.5 million toward a new cancer center - the largest gift in the nonprofit hospital's 76-year history.

"I know what patients go through," said Ernie Townsend, who lives in Tustin. "I just thought maybe it's time to step up and help out. You get to the point where: What else do you want to spend money on?"

SEE GIFT • PAGE 9



FILE PHOTO, THE REGISTER

LIFESAVER: If not for St. Joseph Hospital, Ernie Townsend "would be dead right now," said Josh Townsend, left.



PHOTOS: JOSH SUDDOCK, THE REGISTER

COMING ATTRACTIONS: Crews work on a renovation project at St. Joseph Hospital. The \$2.5 million that Ernie and Josh Townsend donated will go to a new cancer center.

GIFT: Cancer center opens in '08

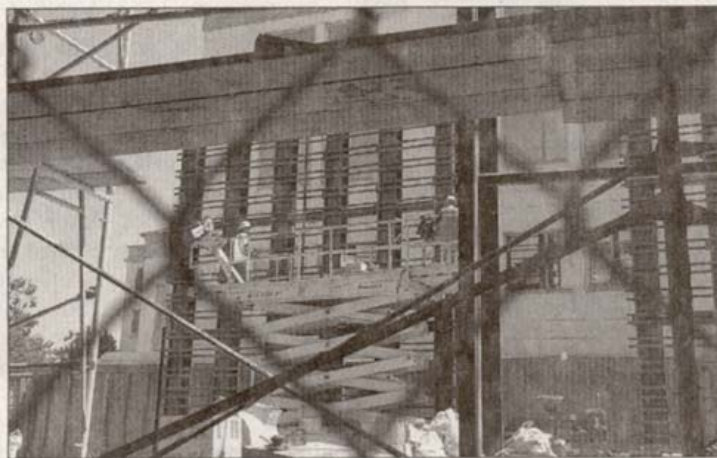
FROM PAGE 1

The Orange hospital has asked Ernie Townsend, 60, to speak at the \$70 million cancer center's Sept. 29 groundbreaking. The center will open in 2008.

"We're thrilled with the donation," said Larry Ainsworth, hospital president and chief executive. "It really made us feel good a former patient wanted to give."

Ainsworth said the gift amounts to nearly one-third of the hospital's annual fundraising goal. He said that the hospital relies on the generosity of others to keep up with state mandates for nursing staff members, earthquake safety and the treatment of uninsured patients.

Townsend's illness was diagnosed three years ago after he



NEW FACE: Crews renovate a St. Joseph building. The cancer center breaks ground later this month.

went to the doctor with stomach pain. A colonoscopy revealed a large tumor. That week, Townsend had surgery at St. Joseph. He also had six months of chemotherapy.

"If it wasn't for the hospital,

he would be dead right now," said Josh Townsend, 29. "The only way we could pay back, since I'm not a doctor, is give them a means to provide a better work environment for doctors and patients."