

## Local residents show support of Cowles Clinic despite opposition by local medical facilities

My wife and I have lived in Greene County since 1994 and have looked forward to improved retail and medical facilities moving into the area.

A few years ago, Dr. Robert Cowles announced that he planned to build a first-class multi-specialty medical complex near Lake Oconee. We believed that this campus is exactly what is needed to supply multi-specialty medical care to the local citizens and the growing number of people moving into the area. The availability of this facility means many of us can receive treatment locally without having to travel the distances to At-

lanta or Athens.

Included in this planned facility is a radiation oncology center. This center will provide full-time chemotherapy and radiation treatments to area patients, as well as, patients who may come from other areas of the country.

This center is of special interest to me since I was diagnosed with prostate cancer two years ago and needed to travel to Atlanta five days a week for six weeks to receive treatment. If my cancer returns I would no longer need to make the difficult trip to Atlanta for treatment. That much traveling while receiving treatment was certainly a strain on me.

I understand that the state requires any sizeable health facility to apply to the Georgia Department of Community Health for a Certificate of Need (CON) in order that there is not an over-building of certain care facilities in a given area. The state granted Cowles Clinic an initial approval to construct the center.

Now two health care facilities some distance from us,

The Medical College of Georgia in Augusta and Oconee Regional Medical Center in Milledgeville, have appealed the CON approval. They want the CON overturned so as not to risk losing patients to the new clinic no matter what hardship is imposed upon the local citizens.

If these appeals are upheld at a hearing during the third week of January 2005 the local citizens would be

denied access to a much needed medical infrastructure and local cancer treatment.

What right do hospital facilities between 45 minutes and an hour and a half drive away from us, on a good day, have denying the community needed medical treatment?

*– Submitted by Durward Thomas (Tom) Roberts Jr.*