

Quality of care at Northwest Community Hospital in question after revelation that the chief medical officer had no license. **PAGE 3**



CRAIG'S CHICAGO BUSINESS



BUSINESS OF LIFE PAGE 27

CHICAGO BUSINESS.COM | JUNE 18, 2012 | \$3.50

JOHN HANCOCK OBSERVATORY

Movin' on up: Luring the city's high-fliers

Bungee jumping from the John Hancock Center? Don't count on that exactly, but soon, the skyscraper's 94th-floor observatory will offer an adventure to attract more tourists—especially locals with a “been there, done that” attitude.

The observatory, near the top of the Hancock at 875 N. Michigan Ave., gets about half the visitors of Skydeck Chicago, on Willis Tower's 103rd floor. Adding visitors to the Signature Room restaurant on the 95th floor brings the numbers closer together, says Carey Randall, director of marketing at the John Hancock Observatory.

Still, it's Ms. Randall's mission to lure more paying guests. Over the last two years, she has made progress with a few high-in-the-sky bells and whistles.

Skating in the Sky, a 900-square-foot synthetic ice ring, debuted in 2011. Skaters get a full view of the city and lake, and Chicago Blackhawks youth coaches are on hand one day a week to give kids skating lessons. The seasonal skating rink helped boost visitor counts by about 2 percent in 2011.

In 2010, the observatory added a cafe and a bar with a full liquor license, and a concierge to help visitors with restaurant reserva-

tions, theater tickets and other touristy activities.

That year, the observatory also installed interactive telescopes that give viewers a clear nighttime or daytime view, no matter how soupy the cloud cover: On bad-weather days, the cameras offer a panoramic photo of the view as it would appear in clear skies. Only one other observatory, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, has the technology.

“Our goal isn't to get people up and down; it's to get people to enjoy the experience,” she says.

A few logistical maneuvers have helped her out. Until two years ago, Chicago's CityPass, which offers five attractions for \$84, paired the observatory as an either-or attraction with Skydeck. Last year, CityPass began teaming the observatory with the Museum of Science and Industry, which meant CityPass holders no longer have to choose between the Hancock Observatory and Skydeck, Ms. Randall says. As a result, CityPass admissions have risen 20 percent.

That's heartening news, but what Ms. Randall really wants is that adventure element. “There's a huge audience for that, based on Skydeck's numbers,” she says, referring to Skydeck's glass balconies that give visitors the thrill of stepping out over the city.

Later this year, Ms. Randall will scout for ideas at a meeting of the World Federation of Great Towers, a group that exists to draw more people to the tops of buildings.

What it offers:

360-degree views of the lake and skyline from a 94th-floor observatory

Visitors:

2011: 600,000

2010: 600,000

EXPERT OPINION

Ann Marie Arzt, president, Eventscape Inc., a Barrington-based marketing and event-planning firm.

Main draw: “The sweeping views of the city and the multimedia tour hosted by David Schwimmer.”

Main drawback: “The venue is hugely weather-dependent.”

Her advice:

- ▶ Include the high-speed elevators in the marketing pitch. “Give the elevators a superhero-like name and market them as ‘the ride of your life. Make it an experience,’” complete with a costumed character roaming Michigan Avenue to tempt visitors.
- ▶ Make it fun for kids. “Partner with a company like Legos, where children can design and build their own skyscraper.”
- ▶ Offer a flat fee for families. The cost—\$15 for adults, \$10 for kids—can add up when a family visits. A per-family fee might help overcome the cost barrier for some tourists.

