



\$10 million health facility to open doors this month in downtown Jackson

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Tarryl Jackson | Jackson Citizen Patriot
By

Marsha Kreucher is amazed at how fast the Center for Family Health has grown beyond its original vision in the past 20 years.

It opened in 1991 as the Center for Healthy Beginnings — a collaborative effort spearheaded by Kreucher’s Community Action Agency — to address the county’s high infant-mortality rate.

The staff of 13 saw 818 low-income patients that year. Today, the community health center provides health care and dental care to about 26,000 men, women and children.



Citizen Patriot | Katie Rausch

Now, the center is growing again, opening the doors to its roughly \$10 million health facility this month, consolidating health care for those in need and bringing jobs to downtown Jackson.

The new 54,000-square-foot health center was built on 5 acres at 505 N. Jackson St., the former Art Moehn car dealership site. It will consolidate three of the Center for Family Health’s sites to bring medical, dental and administrative services under one roof in downtown Jackson.

“We have an incredibly beautiful building,” said CEO Molly Kaser. “It’s no longer an empty lot.”

It also includes a pharmacy and diagnostic center. Internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology and dental services will be operating at the new location.

The administrative staff is already on site and the first-floor family medicine office and limited dental services will be open June 20. The additional services will be open June 27.

About \$1 million in federal stimulus funds were used to cover the administrative portion of the new facility. The remainder was paid for by other funding resources like grants and donations.

Patients have said that they would prefer having services downtown, said Dr. Jane Grover, the center’s dental

director.

More than 40 percent of the center's patients live in Jackson.

"We're putting the water where the fire is," Grover said.

Having all services in one location allows patients to schedule appointments with multiple doctors at the same time.

There also will be more exam space, offering less waiting time for patients. The center also has more space for record keeping and management, enabling case workers to be more available to patients and physicians.

Jonathan Greene, executive director of the Downtown Development Authority, said he is excited to see the new center downtown.

"It's going to be a lot of new employees, a lot of traffic," he said. "I know that our businesses are anxious to accommodate their employees and visitors."

The center has been growing by 1,000 patients per year, and Kaser expects that trend to continue.

The Center for Family Health's administrative building was at 2298 Springport Road. It also has operated a handful of clinics, including a dental clinic at 817 W. High St. and a medical office at 300 W. Washington Ave. Those soon-to-be vacant properties will be up for lease.

The Center for Family Health will continue to operate school-based health centers at Northeast Elementary School and the Middle School at Parkside in addition to the downtown Jackson site.

It recently opened its third school-based facility at Jackson High School, which is open to all youths in Jackson County ages 10 to 21 and is expected to serve 500 to 600 patients in the first year.

The Center for Family Health currently has 180 employees but has budgeted for more than 200, so more staff will be hired, Kaser said.

These employees will be purchasing goods and spending their wages locally, she said.

"We're very interested in working with the downtown business owners to promote their services," Kaser said.

Based on the center's past revenues, there will be about \$20,000 a year in additional income tax revenue for the city, Treasurer Andrew Wrozek said. Property taxes would not come into play because the not-for-profit center is tax-exempt, he said.

The Center for Family Health has a \$17 million

operating budget, with the majority of its funding through federal money, Medicaid and grants. It offers medical care to anyone, but it and other community health centers traditionally serve people with limited access to other health

care.

The center has a sliding fee scale for patients and does not refuse anyone who cannot pay for services.

"I think it will be very exciting for the community to have that center," Kreucher said.

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