

RoyalOakPatch

BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT

Health Care Center for Uninsured Opens With Fanfare

New Covenant Community clinic in Royal Oak is 'doing God's work,' president of William Beaumont Hospital says.

By **Christy Strawser** November 29, 2010

If attendance at the grand opening is an indicator, the new Covenant Community Health Center that offers low-cost medical care to the poor and uninsured will be quite the success.

At least 200 people, including local dignitaries and staff from [Beaumont Hospital \(http://royaloak.patch.com/listings/william-beaumont-hospital-4\)](http://royaloak.patch.com/listings/william-beaumont-hospital-4) and [Covenant Community Care \(http://royaloak.patch.com/articles/community-health-care-now-available-for-everybody\)](http://royaloak.patch.com/articles/community-health-care-now-available-for-everybody), packed the Woodward Avenue facility for its Monday morning ribbon cutting. U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow officially sliced the grand opening red ribbon with help from Royal Oak Mayor Jim Ellison, Paul Propson of Covenant Community Care and other local notables.

"It does the right thing on all fronts," Stabenow said, describing how the new health care center, a partnership between Royal Oak-based Beaumont and the nonprofit Covenant Community Care, based in Detroit, will bring low-cost medical care at a time that's desperately needed.

Covenant Community Care operates two centers in southwest Detroit that see 6,000 patients a year, 82 percent of whom are uninsured.

The center in Royal Oak expects to see up to 8,000 patients a year and operate the same way: Medicaid will be accepted and anyone without insurance will be asked to pay a small fee based on income. Uninsured low-income patients can expect to pay \$20-\$40 per visit, Beaumont said.

"South Oakland County needs community health care," Propson said. "We have discovered hundreds of people in need of health care."

Gene Michalski, president and chief executive officer of Beaumont, said 14,000 more people in Oakland County receive Medicaid, the federally funded program for people living in poverty, than they did in 2001. Ellison said 16 percent of households in Royal Oak alone now have annual incomes of \$25,000 or less.

"It is a sign of the economy," the Royal Oak mayor said. "There is a need in our community."

Lori Pero, who handles Medicaid issues for Omnicare Insurance, said "this is not just a problem for people in Detroit. It's sad, but people everywhere need help. ...We need more hospital systems to do this."

Beaumont will pay \$1.4 million to get the 3,800-square-foot center off the ground. Beaumont doctors, nurses and medical assistants will offer primary and preventive care to people of all ages, plus obstetrical care and childhood immunizations. Covenant is in charge of operating the center,

"I believe this is God's work," Michalski said.

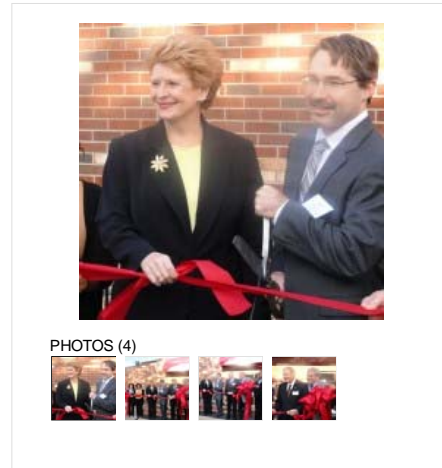
Craig Covey, the longtime mayor of Ferndale who was recently elected to the Oakland County Commission, said the center will benefit the whole region. "People from Ferndale will come here, too. We'll all be supporting each other," Covey said.

More people than ever may soon be able to take advantage of Covenant-style low-cost health care centers, Stabenow said .

"We're planning the next one," Michalski said. "I'd like to take care of Macomb County, too."

The center is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Tuesday from noon - 8 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Call 248-556-4900 to schedule an appointment.

Are you surprised at the local poverty numbers Beaumont and others are using for the new Covenant Community Health Center? Tell us in the comments.



PHOTOS (4)



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COMMENTS (1)

robertjimeniz

1:55am on Tuesday, November 30, 2010

You guys should stop complaining because, one the health care we have now isnt as good as it was supposed to be. also the law has just been signed so give it some time. so if u want to say u have the right to choose tell that to ur congress men or state official. If you do not have insurance and need one You can find full medical coverage at the lowest price check <http://ow.ly/3akSX> .If you have health insurance and do not care about cost just be happy about it and trust me you are not going to loose anything!

