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Muskegon Family Care expanding, consolidating in single location

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Dave Alexander | Muskegon Chronicle

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MUSKEGON HEIGHTS — A nonprofit, family medical provider that serves more than 10 percent of Muskegon County residents is expanding and consolidating operations in Muskegon Heights.



View full size Hooker | De Jong Architects
Muskegon Family Care plan to expand its facility at 2201 S. Getty. The \$5 million expansion is expected to be completed in next summer.

Muskegon Family Care will be doubling the size of its Getty Street Medical Clinic, 2201 S. Getty, and consolidating all its operations under one roof. When the nearly \$5 million expansion is completed in summer 2011, Muskegon Family Care will consolidate its dental and medical clinic at 1700 Oak into the new facility.

"The expansion will increase our access to patients, and we will be able to serve more," Muskegon Family Care Medical Director Dr. David Wilson said. "It will allow us to provide a higher quality of care in a state-of-the-art facility. It will be more efficient, and our patients will have less waiting time."

Muskegon Family Care is one of two federally qualified health centers in Muskegon County. The nonprofit corporation began on Getty Street as the Koinonia Medical Center founded by Dr. Dale Williams.

From the beginning, Muskegon Family Care has been dedicated to serving the disadvantaged, according to current Director Sheila Bridges. After Williams' involvement in the clinic, it became part of the former Mercy Hospital in 1998 and became an independent agency associated with the hospital in 2000.

Mercy Health Partners, since the merger of Muskegon's hospital systems in 2008, also is associated with Hackley Community Care Center, another independent federally qualified health center, at 2700 Baker in Muskegon Heights. The former Hackley Hospital began that organization in 1992.

Both Muskegon Family Care and Hackley Community Care serve low-income, uninsured residents and many covered under the federal Medicaid and Medicare programs. Muskegon Family Care has 24,000 patients, and in the current economic downturn is growing, Bridges said.

"The need is here," said Nicole Bradford, a physician assistant and operational director for Muskegon Family Care.

Muskegon Family Care moved into its current 2201 S. Getty facility in 2005. Construction on a 22,000-square-foot addition will begin in November with Muskegon Construction Co. as project managers.

Muskegon Family Care is moving out of the Oak Street facility, which is the former General Hospital. The Oak Clinic has been in operation since 1989, located along U.S. 31 at Apple Avenue

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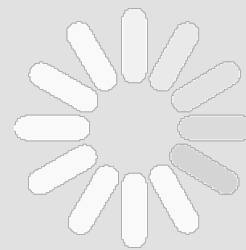
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to more easily serve patients in eastern and northern Muskegon County.

Patients who will have transportation problems getting to the Muskegon Heights location will be offered a van service, bus passes or cab vouchers, Bridges said.

The Oak Street clinic has 20 examination rooms with 10 health care providers, while there are 30 rooms with 13 providers currently on Getty Street. The expansion will include 33 new examination rooms — each much larger than the typical doctor's office, so that patients can bring family members along to appointments.

"Medicine is a family affair," Bridges said. "Our mission is to serve the underserved. We care for the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of our families."

When completed, the Getty Street facilities will house all 160 Muskegon Family Care employees. Wilson heads a group of seven physicians. The 19-member medical staff also includes physician assistants, nurse practitioners and nurse midwives, he said.

Besides basic family medical care, Muskegon Family Care provides dental, behavioral health, infant, pharmaceutical, vision, parenting and women's health services. No one is turned away, Bridges said.

The organization has a \$14 million annual budget, she said.

Funding is a "delicate balancing act," Bridges said of relying on what federal Medicaid and Medicare pay for physician services, along some patients who have private insurance. The budget is also supported by charitable contributions.

Part of the economics of Muskegon Family Care is the number of patients that the health care providers see — a greater number than an average physician or nurse in private practice, Bridges said. Wilson said medical personnel at the clinic are specially trained and dedicated to serving disadvantaged populations.

The nearly \$5 million expansion of the Getty Street facilities, designed by Hooker/De Jong Architects of Muskegon, is being funded through a combination of the organization's equity, a federal grant and a mortgage from Community Shores Bank guaranteed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Economic Development division.

Neighborhood residents are proud of the Muskegon Family Care facility that was built on Getty Street in 2005, Bridges said.






"The residents have been so happy to see such a building of that type in the neighborhood," Bridges said. "There is community pride in that it is a community health center."

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 **Kelly** October 12, 2010 at 9:57AM


..."current economic downturn"??? Someone better tell those wingnuts at Muskegon Family Fare (sic) that the media announced recently that the recession is over!

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 **gryph44** October 12, 2010 at 12:28PM


Attempted to get services from family care a few years ago, don't waste your time, it basically boiled down to I was not a minority and male so I was going to get nothing, nice to see my tax dollars being used for another discriminatory thing

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 **notclueless40** October 12, 2010 at 3:19PM


Good to see that my tax dollars are going for SOME people to get a "higher quality of care in a state-of-the-art facility". Just what we all need, a bigger health care center so more people can jump on the gov't plan. Too bad that there aren't enough of my tax dollars left to support programs that I would actually benefit from. Time to go to work. Millions of people are sitting home on their butts counting on me.

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