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Medical clinic nears opening

November 13, 2010 - By Kurt Hauglie, DMG Writer

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PAAVOLA - A health clinic on U.S. 41 north of Hancock, which was supposed to open last spring, will instead open at the end of November with limited service.

Joseph Zyble, communications manager for the Upper Peninsula Association of Rural Health Services Inc. in Marquette, said the opening of the clinic, which will be in the former SK Kitchens By Design building, was delayed due to a change in payments from Medicaid, which dropped dental coverage in June 2009.

"We experienced more patients without health insurance, so we had to put this project on hold," he said.

The clinic will operate with the assistance of Aspirus Keweenaw Hospital, which will provide physicians, physicians' assistants and nurse practitioners.

Zyble said the UPARHS provides medical, dental, behavioral health and pharmacy services for rural areas, which may not have medical facilities. Much of their services are used by low-income people without insurance, but people with insurance also use the service.

"We try to improve the access to health care for everyone," he said. "The more patients we have that are insured helps (to continue services)."

The organization is a private nonprofit, which uses federal and state funding, copays for private insurance, Medicaid and Medicare payments and donations.

However, the number of patients with insurance is declining, Zyble said.

"We're seeing more patients without insurance coverage," he said.

Zyble said the clinic is expected to open by the end of November with behavioral services, with more offerings later.

"Shortly after we'll be adding medical services," he said.

The medical services should be available in December, with dental gradually phased in and pharmacy possibly the last to be added.

"That would come in later after everything is operational," he said. "We are moving forward."

Zyble said some services, such as X-rays, will have to be done at other locations.

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