



Expanded Muskegon Family Care facility creates excitement, expected benefits

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Eric Gaertner | Muskegon Chronicle

By

MUSKEGON HEIGHTS — A walk down one of the new hallways inside the expanded Muskegon Family Care facility is all it takes to recognize the benefits of more space and consolidated medical and [dental](#) services.

A stroll along Getty Street reveals the views that make the large, nonprofit health-care facility a type of gateway into the city of Muskegon Heights' northeast section.

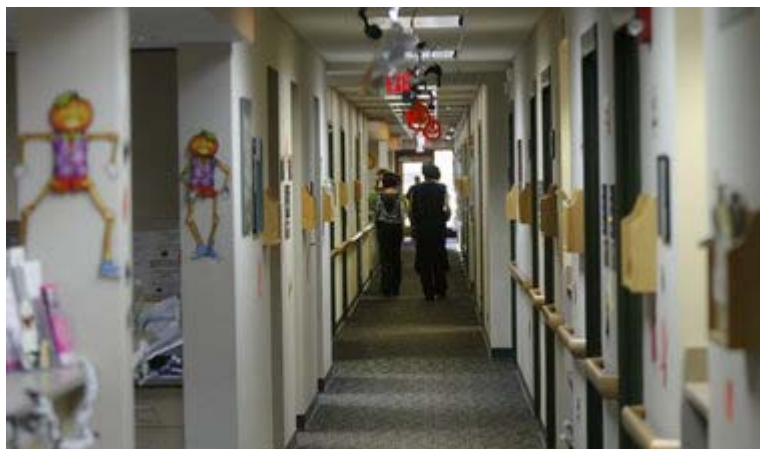
Whether inside or outside, the nearly \$5 million expansion of Muskegon Family Care to serve its growing patient base — mainly those on Medicaid or without insurance — is generating excitement among government leaders and the nonprofit's staff about the potential for improved medical and dental service in the heart of Muskegon County's urban area.



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Dr. Jeff Kelley works on Ahnisti Mathews, 3, as her mother, Sharon R. Kitchen of Muskegon watches at the Muskegon Family Care facility in Muskegon Heights. An open house was held [Wednesday](#) for the expanded, consolidated facility.

For nearly a month, Executive Director Sheila Bridges and the 160 employees at Muskegon Family Care have been providing services in the building following the nearly \$5 million expansion that basically doubled the size of the clinic.



The expanded facility features 61 examination rooms for medical patients, double what the facility used to have, and rooms for dental care.

The expansion was made possible by consolidating services from the provider's former Oak Avenue clinic.

The Getty Street facility now includes rooms for



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A long hallway of exam rooms available for patients at the Muskegon Family Care facility in Muskegon Heights.

midwife services, a larger waiting room and state-of-the-art labs and exam areas.

Muskegon Family Care is one of two federally-qualified health centers in Muskegon Heights. Along

with Hackley Community Care Center, 2700 Baker, Muskegon Family Care serves low-income, uninsured residents and many covered under the federal Medicaid and [Medicare](#) programs.

The economic downturn and job loss in the community have led to an growing number of residents seeking services from such facilities, officials say. Muskegon Family Care's patient load reached 24,000, even before the 22,000-square-foot addition was completed.

Bridges said the [consolidation](#) of services at one location provides several advantages, including more efficiencies with the pharmacy and dental services in the same building as the medical clinic. She also pointed out that the early indication is that patients who used the Oak Avenue clinic are accessing the services they need at the expanded Getty Street facility.

"It's going to be so much more convenient for our patients," Bridges said. "It's sort of the one-stop [shopping](#), just like Meijer does. Now we're truly one unit."

Muskegon Family Care Board President Dorothy Scott, who also serves as a Muskegon Heights councilwoman, was "happy, very, very happy" about the expected benefits for the patients being served and the overall community with the larger, modern health-care building.



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The Muskegon Family Care facility, 2201 S. Getty at Hackley Avenue in Muskegon Heights, has been expanded with a nearly \$5 million project.

"It's so beautiful and rest assured our citizens are very, very happy," Scott said.

Muskegon Family Care officials said the expanded facility has been well received by the neighborhood. Bridges said during last week's open house that neighborhood church Greater Deliverance Outreach Ministries, 726 E. Barney, agreed to allow the clinic's employees park in the church's parking lot to help alleviate the need for more parking.

"They are so proud of it," Bridges said of the neighborhood's reaction to the facility. "A lot of them we know their names. They are so very protective of it."

Cormeka Bates, 38, of Muskegon, who grew up in Muskegon Heights, toured the expanded facility and said it is a nice addition to the community.

"It's outstanding," Bates said. "It's really upscale."



[Enlarge](#)

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Medical assistant Andrea Bailey checks the temperature and blood pressure of patient Lena Buozis, 48, of Muskegon at the Muskegon Family Care facility in Muskegon Heights on October 6, 2011. "It's a great facility to work in, it has been really amazing," Bailey said of working at Muskegon Family Care. (Muskegon Chronicle/Ken Stevens) Photo available for sale, please call 231-725-6368.

[Muskegon Family Care](#) gallery (12 photos)

The expansion project was funded by the organization's equity, a federal grant and a mortgage guaranteed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development program, which provided a \$6.35 million loan guarantee to Community Shores Bank to help finance the project through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

James Turner, the state director for USDA Rural Development, spoke during the open house, highlighting the project's ability to leverage local financial resources and provide construction jobs.

"This is obviously a great day for the community," Turner said. "This investment is what I would call an investment in your community infrastructure."

Besides basic family medical and dental care, Muskegon Family Care provides behavioral health, infant, pharmaceutical, vision, parenting and

women's health services.

The expansion was designed by **Hooker DeJong Architects of Muskegon** and the work was led by Muskegon Construction Company, which served as the general contractor. About 100 trades workers took part in the project, according to the general contractor.

Email: egaertner@muskegonchronicle.com

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