

OACAA *briefing*

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Agencies work to keep communities healthy

ILCAO partners in medical campus

Ironton Lawrence Community Action Organization (ILCAO) didn't wait for Congress to change health care. The Agency has provided health services to its community for more than 36 years and is about to restore critical services lost when the local hospital closed 10 years ago.

"It was a terrible day," ILCAO Executive Director D.R. Gossett said of the day Lawrence County General Hospital (also known as River Valley Hospital) closed in 2001. "We took for granted it would always be there. Most folks around here were born there."

The hospital opened in 1937 and was expanded in 1948. In 2000, plans for a large expansion were announced but by January 2001, the debt the hospital carried overwhelmed its board and it closed. Our Lady of Bellfonte Hospital purchased the property and donated the five-acre site to the Ironton Port Authority. It was demolished in 2008.

According to Gossett, discussions for ILCAO to take over or replace the hospital occurred as early as 1998, the year he

joined ILCAO as fiscal director. Closing the hospital meant that the facility was no longer exempt from the latest laws and regulations. The nullified "grandfather clauses" hampered efforts to reopen the facility at the same site. Lack of a facility has hampered health care in the community, Gossett said.

"Not only did we lose a hospital, we lost a network of physicians and surgeons that all had to move to Kentucky or West Virginia to continue their practices," Gossett said.

ILCAO already has a history of trying to fill the health care gaps in its community. For 36 years, it has operated several health center sites in the county, including one of Ohio's first Federally Qualified Health Centers. Five sites throughout the county now see approximately 13,000 patients in approximately 45,000 visits annually. The centers operate on a sliding fee scale so they are open to everyone and no one is turned away regardless of whether they have insurance or Medicaid or are self-pay.

Continued on page 3

Cincy agency home to WinMed clinic

Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency has spent several years turning a former store in the Bond Hill neighborhood into a true one-stop community services center. Cutting the ribbon to open WinMed Health Services' newest clinic in the building completed that journey.

"This completes the available space in this building," said CAA President and CEO Gwen L. Robinson. "It comes to the truest sense of a one-stop center. And it also epitomizes the ability to bring in all income levels."

The clinic officially opened July 7 and operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is staffed by three pediatricians, a family practice doctor, an OB/GYN, a podiatrist and three dentists and it is designed to take all types of insurance.

"The beautiful thing is a lot of these doctors live in this community and they had a private practice and they moved to Winton Hills Medical Center and now they're back home," said Miriam Crenshaw, CEO of WinMed.

All are welcome at the clinic, however the partners recognize that the location provides health care access that low and moderate income residents of the neighborhood have not had.

"Access to affordable and quality health care is vital to low-income families," said Mark Lawson, chair of the CAA Board of Trustees. "It's really partnerships like these that allow social service agencies to expand beyond their traditional boundaries and work together to even better serve our com-

Continued on page 3

For a video tour of the new clinic, visit www.oacaa.org.



Visit the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies online at www.oacaa.org.

Cincinnati ...

Continued from page 1

munities.”

Sr. Joan Krimm, chair of WinMed’s board, said the organization has been searching for and praying about a location for a Bond Hill clinic for several years. They worked with the community through surveys and focus groups to create the clinic that would best serve its needs.

“We’re here to help the community,” she said. “We’re here to be a part of the community.”

Services available at the clinic include: routine physicals, sick visits, immunizations, minor injuries, management of chronic diseases, well child visits, school and sports physicals, Head Start and day care exams, pre-employment screenings, lab testing, and a full service dental clinic.

The clinic has seven exam rooms, a lab, nurses’ station, staff room and lobby. Walk-in and same day appointments are available and many of the staff members speak Spanish or French. Interpreters are available for Farsi, Mandingo, Somali and Arabic. Most insurance plans will be accepted including Medicare and Medicaid. Self pay or uninsured patients are also welcome. Fees are based on family size and income so no one is turned away.

“We’re here to serve the underserved and we need to stay focused on that,” Crenshaw said. “We take our work seriously and we’re about quality health care for the



Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency President and CEO Gwen Robinson, center, and WinMed Health Services CEO Miriam Crenshaw, far right, and other guests cut the ribbon to open the new WinMed clinic in the CAA building.

people who need it the most.”

In opening the clinic, Robinson and Crenshaw were joined by doctors, board members, representatives of local and state officials and a few children. Robinson also read a proclamation from Senator Sherrod Brown commending the CAA and WinMed “for joining together to better serve Cincinnati’s low-income families.” Rev. Donald Jones, a CAA Board Member, provided the dedication.

For Robinson, the clinic’s opening

completes a large and long-sought goal to genuinely serve the entire community. The former store now is home not only to CAA, but to a branch library, a jobs center and now a clinic.

“Yes, we serve low-income families, but now you have all income levels having a reason to come to the building – to use the library, the health clinic, to be docents, to volunteer,” she said. “So we now have brought the entire community to us.”