

## Meriden

# Health center gains accreditation

By Dan Champagne  
Record-Journal staff

**MERIDEN**—After two years of preparation, the Community Health Center Inc. has achieved accreditation from the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

The commission is a national agency whose mission is "to improve the quality of care to the public through the provision of health care accreditation and related services that support performance improvement in health care organizations."

It is uncommon for health centers to apply for accreditation, but it has long been a necessity for hospitals.

"In the last few years they've started to give accreditations to organizations other than hospitals," said Shirley Fryer, site director at

the Meriden facility. "The Community Health Center applied for this and worked on it for a long time."

"You have to meet all kinds of standards," Fryer said. "Everything must be in place. They look at if you are providing the best services for the patient. They look at the entire environment. You have to document everything. It's difficult because of all the things that you do, but probably don't document. You have to remember to document them."

Some of the areas looked at included the quality of the staff, fire safety and even what the Center would do in case of a bomb scare.

The commission required that every site of the Community Health Center meet the criteria in order to gain accreditation. Besides Meriden, these sites include Middletown, New Britain, New London, Old Saybrook and Groton.

"A lot of time and effort went into this," Fryer said of the two-year process. "The organization even made weekly newsletters to update the staff. It was a joint effort for all the sites. Everyone came together to achieve this."

Now that accreditation has been achieved, the Community Health Center must continue to do the things that got it the recognition in the first place. It will be re-evaluated every three years.

"It had to be a team effort," said Larry Kluber, a member of the Community Health Center board of directors. "One thing that the board was concerned about was the question of how are we going to get this all accomplished while still treating the patients with quality care. That's where it took a super effort from all the employees. Not only did we serve our patients in great fashion,

but we got through this process with flying colors."

"We all put our best efforts in," said Lynda Torres, a dental receptionist at the Meriden site. "We had to work very hard for this. It's important that we got this because we believe that the patient deserves the highest quality care."

The accreditation process provides an effective, credible, quality oversight of health care organizations so that the public can be assured that the care that they receive from a commission-accredited agency is of the highest quality.

"I think that the administrative staff knew what they needed to do from the beginning," Fryer said. "There are over 200 employees and everyone came together. We knew we were doing the things that needed to be done, but it's nice to have someone else recognize that."

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