



Heart of the City
HEALTH CENTER

For Immediate Release

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Cherry Street Health Services Breaks Ground for New Model Healthcare Facility

Grand Rapids, Mich., May 13, 2010 – Cherry Street Health Services is pleased to announce a groundbreaking celebration for its new Heart of the City Health Center. The celebration, planned for May 14 at 2:00 p.m., is open to the public and will feature Senator Debbie Stabenow, who was instrumental in obtaining substantial federal funding for the project. This new building, located at the corner of Cherry Street and Sheldon, will reach an additional 13,000 low-income people annually with primary health care services. It is also designed to act as a national model for a new way of delivering integrated care.

Heart of the City Health Center is a collaborative project among three local healthcare providers: Cherry Street Health Services, Touchstone innovare and Proaction Behavioral Health Alliance. Cherry Street Health Services was established in 1988 to provide primary health care services to people in Kent County, with special emphasis on low-income families. Touchstone innovare, established in 1974, helps people who have a serious mental illness that affects their life in a significant way, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Proaction Behavioral Health Alliance is a collection of organizations provide effective residential and outpatient treatment, re-entry services, employee assistance programs, and wellness and prevention programming for youth. Together these organizations will serve more than 27,000 patients each year at Heart of the City Health Center.

Heart of the City Health Center will provide much-needed additional health care capacity for thousands of people. The demand for healthcare for low-income individuals in Kent County far exceeds the supply, and demand is increasing at a rate of 24% per year. Health centers and hospital clinics only have capacity to serve about 60% of the primary medical needs of the 194,000 low income people in Kent County. The other 40% - half of whom are children - must either go without care or use emergency rooms. Heart of the City Health Center will replace the extremely overcrowded Grand Rapids Pediatrics and Ferguson Dental facilities and significantly expand capacity for new patients.

As poverty in Michigan increases, the overcrowding problem continues to worsen. According to the most recent Kids Count report, Michigan's overall child poverty rate was 19.3 percent in 2007, up from 18.3 percent in 2005. Poverty likely has increased in the past two years because Michigan's economy has continued to decline. In addition to causing a decrease in the number of people who have medical insurance, the faltering economy and high unemployment rates are also driving up the incidence of mental health needs. More people need help with depression and anxiety disorders, but fewer of them have the means to pay for it.

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“As a long-time advocate for community health centers, I was pleased to secure funding for the Heart of the City Health Center,” says Senator Stabenow, who obtained \$400,000 in federal funding to help pay for the facility. “It will bring new jobs to the area and provide high-quality care to thousands of families in West Michigan every year, and includes an innovative approach that brings together physical and behavioral health services. It’s also great news for parents and children as they integrate pediatric care, dental, and vision services under one roof. I want to thank Cherry Street Health Services, Touchstone innovare, and Proaction for implementing a national model that all health centers should follow.”

“This project presented a unique combination of need and opportunity for us,” says Chris Shea, Executive Director of Cherry Street Health Services. “We are receiving federal stimulus money and state matching dollars that will cover more than half of the project cost. This means we can create much-needed capacity with a healthy dose of dollars from outside the community. We especially appreciate Senator Stabenow’s efforts to secure a substantial amount of federal funding.” More than \$18 million in government grant funding is expected to help fund the project.

In addition to expanding capacity, Heart of the City Health Center will be a pilot site for a new kind of integrated care model. Health care delivery today is fragmented. Individual providers focus on specific health issues, rather on the person as a whole. However, many conditions tend to co-occur, such as diabetes and glaucoma, or obesity and depression. Limitations such as transportation, insurance, and employment can make effective treatment especially difficult for low-income people. The partners in this project believe that effective care must address the whole person in a way that is easy to access. They hope that their approach – treating diseases of the mind as well as diseases of the body in one location - will become a model for health care provision throughout the United States in the years to come. In the process, they will simplify access to care for low income and under-served populations (especially children) and greatly improve delivery of those services.

The Grand Rapids Community Foundation is one of the first philanthropic organizations to commit to funding Heart of the City Health Center. “We are very excited about the way Cherry Street and its partners are re-evaluating the care model and looking to create a new integrated approach,” says Laurie Craft, program director at Grand Rapids Community Foundation. “We are very impressed with the collaborative model, the new approach to integrating care, and the accessibility of the location.”

“This is a completely new model of care,” confirms Shea. “We know we won’t get a different result simply by putting people in the same building. That’s why we are consulting with experts, focusing on training, and ensuring that technology will support new work processes. We want Heart of the City Health Center to evolve as a national model for integrated care delivery.”

Heart of the City Health Center will do more than increase capacity for health care. The building location, at the corner of Cherry Street and Sheldon, is a former brownfield site. The contaminated dirt will be removed during excavation, making the site safe for redevelopment. Construction of the 79,300 square foot building project is estimated to provide employment for 200 or more people, with the new building providing 100 new professional healthcare jobs.

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You can learn more about the project by visiting www.HeartOfTheCityHealthCenter.org.

About Cherry Street Health Services: Cherry Street Health Services was established in 1988 to provide primary health care services to people in Kent County, with special emphasis on low-income families. Cherry Street Health Services provides a combination of preventive care, self care, and physician care to more than 50,000 patients annually. Learn more at www.cherryhealth.org.

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