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Community Health Center opens new facility

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STAFF WRITER

It's only been open in Bristol for a little over two years, but the Community Health Center of Bristol has expanded its patient base so much so that it had to move into a larger facility.

Last week, the center held the grand opening of its new location at the corner of North Main and Race streets, just a few minutes down the road from its previous location.

"Everybody, healthy or not, needs primary health care," Margaret Flinter, senior vice president and clinic director of Community Health Center (CHC), said, and CHC offers that service to everyone.

CHC opened in Bristol in 2010, at the time just providing primary medical services. The need in Bristol was on the rise and the number of services needed was expanding, so CHC realized it needed a larger facility that could offer more to its patients.

Now, with \$1.25 million worth of improvements that included renovations to a 6,500 square foot facility on North Main Street, CHC can offer all under one roof primary care services, dental



TAMMI KNAPIK

Dignitaries cut the ribbon for the new facility of Community Health Center at the corner of North Main and Race streets. From the left, state Rep. Frank Nicaastro (D-Bristol), Mayor Art Ward, state Rep. Betty Boukus (D-Bristol, Plainville), U.S. Rep. John Larson (D-Conn.), Yvette Highsmith Frances, director of CHC Hartford and New Haven County sites, state Rep. Whit Betts (R-Bristol, Terryville), and Michael Nicaastro, CEO and president of the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce.

hygiene, and behavioral health services. Patients also have access to nutrition counseling at the facility, diabetes education and podiatry services. There is also a Quest laboratory at the facility, and state-of-the-art medical exam rooms, all equipped with telephones that can trans-

late a multitude of languages. Assistance is also available for patients needing to apply for public insurance and other support services.

Community Health Center has over 200 locations in the state, offering services to 130,000 residents, Mark Masselli, presi-

dent and CEO of CHC, said.

"We have been able to improve our business by listening to every community we have been welcomed into," Masselli said. "This facility is open for all of the people of Bristol."

Community Health Center has been operating since 1972, and provides its

services to uninsured and underserved individuals.

"There is a shortage or primary care," Flinter said, adding that most of the patients at CHC have a difficult time finding healthcare.

"Our facilities strive to meet the needs of its community," Flinter said, adding that each facility provides "a space where everyone is welcome." She added the new Bristol facility is bright with many windows, warm and inviting to patients.

U.S. Representative John Larson attended the opening, and said having a facility that houses integrated healthcare "is so vitally important."

"The goal is to integrate services at a price that is reasonable and drives down cost," Larson said, adding that the new facility will also create new, permanent, jobs for the city. He said combining services into the one facility is comparable to how communities and government work when they "pull together."

"Government operates best when it is a collective enterprise," Larson said.

CHC's chief medical officer, Dr. Nwando Olayiwola, said the facility

gives patients "a medical home," making it different from a hospital. She added that the facility is entirely independent from hospitals. However, it will work with community hospitals it is closest to— like Bristol Hospital.

The center also holds video conferences, once per week, with physicians from the other CHC facilities. This way, if there are specialists at other facilities, they can provide input to another facility through a video screen.

"These are the kinds of things that make us different," Olayiwola said, adding that the center offers hours that work around the patient's schedule, rather than the patients having to fit time into their schedules to visit the center.

In Bristol, the center will employ nine full-time workers and one part-time.

For more information, visit www.chc1.com, or call the center at (860) 585-5000. The Bristol facility is located at 395 North Main St., on the corner of Race Street.

Comments? Email knaples@BristolObserver.com.

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