

Thompsonville health center offers care to poor, uninsured

By Anne Pallivathuckal

Journal Inquirer

ENFIELD — A community health center named in honor of former Mayor Mary Lou Strom was scheduled to open its doors in the Thompsonville section of town today.

The Mary Lou Strom Primary Care Center, at 5 N. Main St., will offer primary medical services to all, regardless of ability to pay.

Strom, whose 14 years on the Town Council included three terms as mayor, died in December at age 63.

The Community Health Center Inc., a statewide, nonprofit organization, will administer the clinic. Community Health is a federally qualified health center, meaning that it meets certain requirements, including a high standard of clinical care. Several state and town officials were expected to attend the grand opening ceremony today.

The 5,000-square-foot facility has eight medical examination rooms.

The clinic will serve patients who are uninsured, under-insured, or on Medicaid, Mark Masselli, president and CEO of CHC, said Monday. Patients will be charged on a sliding fee scale, based on their income. Masselli added that the new clinic provides a full range of primary-care services. This includes laboratory services and treating aspects of chronic diseases such as asthma and

diabetes.

"A large part of our population has chronic diseases, which we manage," Masselli said.

Initially, there will be one full-time family practitioner. The staff is expected to increase to two or more full-time medical service providers, Masselli said. The clinic will eventually offer behavioral health support services.

Health Department tracking tuberculosis case at MCC

By Christine McCluskey

Journal Inquirer

MANCHESTER — People who may have been exposed to tuberculosis at Manchester Community College will receive letters from the college today recommending skin tests next week and three months from now to see if they contracted the disease.

Town Director of Health Maryann Chemiak Lexius wouldn't say exactly how many letters were

mailed, but said the number was "less than 100."

The total number of people who should be tested could rise, though, as health officials continue to track the disease, which typically progresses slowly, Lexius said.

Tuberculosis is a potentially fatal disease that is transmitted through the air, such as through coughing or sneezing. It is fully treatable and preventable.

Some people, particularly those who travel to parts of the world

The facility also offers services such as electronic medical records and a language line in every medical examining room, allowing for translation of 123 languages.

The clinic works in partnership with hospitals, including Johnson Memorial Hospital, St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Hartford Hospital, and Connecticut Children's Medical Center, accord-

ing to Masselli.

Through a partnership with Walgreens, the clinic offers discounted prescription drugs for the uninsured, up to 50 percent off the regular price, Masselli said.

Community Health Center, which also is administering in-school dental clinics, is funded by patient reimbursements and state and federal grants.

where tuberculosis is common, are exposed to the disease but don't develop an active case of tuberculosis or any symptoms, Lexius said. The skin tests identify both these people and those who do have an active case, she said.

The state Tuberculosis Control Program tracks cases and notifies town health departments of them. The health departments then work with the tuberculosis patient to develop a list of close contacts who could have been exposed — an "inner circle," Lexius said.

Then the health department and the patient develop an "outer ring" of contacts who also could have had contact significant enough to be exposed, she said. She said everyone who got the letters from MCC was in that "outer ring."

"Tuberculosis is not a disease that is easily contracted," Lexius said.

She said the health department worked with MCC to decide how best to notify people of their possible exposure and that the college officials felt a letter would be the best way to provide uniform information to everyone.

Since tuberculosis is typically

such a slow-moving bacterium — it takes three months from the time of exposure before a skin test will show a positive result, which is the reason for the two-stage testing — communication faster than a letter wasn't necessary, Lexius said.

But she said the health department understands that for the recipients of the letters, "it's very frightening information."

Lexius said the state Tuberculosis Control Program will provide medication to those who test positive and don't have health insurance.

She said federal law prohibits her from releasing information about the person who has the active case of tuberculosis such as the person's hometown, age, sex, and whether he or she is a student, faculty, or staff member.

MCC serves over 15,000 students each year and, as of this past spring, has 377 teaching faculty.

Lexius said the last case of tuberculosis at MCC was over 10 years ago. She will be at the college conducting the skin tests next week.

The Health Department can be reached at 647-3173.

NYC descendants of Columbus co-pilots want recognition for forefathers

NEW YORK (AP) — They were co-pilots when Christopher Colum-

women," says Joe, who runs the Abtaacadabra costume store in mid-

