



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 9, 2013

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**Official Groundbreaking El Rio Community Health Center's
NEW 54,000 Square Foot Medical Facility Westside Downtown**

Tucson, Arizona – On Friday, May 31st at 4:00 pm El Rio Community Health Center will break ground on a new state-of-the-art building at 839 W. Congress. Partial funding for the new building was made possible by a grant awarded last year through the Department of Health and Human Services - Affordable Care Act. “The announcement last year of \$5 million in federal funding for a new building at the Congress site was great news for Tucson and most importantly the 79,000 patients we currently serve,” said Kathy Byrne, Executive Director.

The total cost of building construction, equipment and furnishings will be just over \$14 million dollars. El Rio Health Center Foundation received a \$300,000 challenge gift for the project from Alan & Jan Levin and their family. Thanks to the generous support of individuals, foundations and corporations over \$600,000 has been pledged in private support for the new Congress building to date. BBVA Compass won the bid for a loan to help fund the balance of the project.

Construction is expected to take one year and is being managed by BFL Construction and BWS Architects. The new health center will be LEED certified and will feature a demo kitchen where dietitians and staff will work directly with patients to teach healthy eating essentials. A community garden will be added in a later phase of the project. A coffee shop will be built inside as an area of respite and an elevated viewing gallery will face east to the downtown skyline. A new “centering room” is planned for expectant parents who will enjoy expanded space for educational purposes, while they are being served by El Rio midwives. The site will also include lab, radiology and pharmacy services offer comprehensive services under one roof.

A future advantage of this El Rio site is that it is located at the end of the new street car line. Barriers to transportation are common for El Rio patients and this new mode of transportation will add one more feature to help under-served people. Additionally, El Rio is available to the private sector and hopes to serve employees working in the downtown area and those affiliated with the University of Arizona once the new site is fully staffed and can accommodate more patients.

During construction, current El Rio patients will have access to valet parking. After the new facility is complete, demolition of the current one story Robert Gomez building will take place to make way for a new parking lot. The existing two story 26,000 square foot building made possible thanks to funding from Angel Charity, Inc. in 1991 will remain intact and will be connected to the new building with unique walkways.

**The public is invited to attend the groundbreaking:
4:00-5:00pm Friday, May 31, 2013
El Rio Community Health Center - 839 West Congress, Tucson, AZ 85745**

El Rio Community Health Center is the largest provider of medical and dental services to uninsured and Medicaid populations in Pima County. El Rio serves the medical and dental needs of more than 79,000 patients annually. El Rio employs over 800 people with an annual budget of over \$90 million dollars. A national model of health care excellence, El Rio's mission is to “improve the health of our community through comprehensive, accessible, affordable, quality and compassionate care.” www.elrio.org.

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