

Health centers plan for future after Good Samaritan Hospital closes



Kaitlin Schroeder Staff Writer

Friday, June 29, 2018 @ 3:52 PM Business

Even after Good Samaritan Hospital is torn down, health services will remain at the campus at Fiver Rivers Health Centers. CONTRIBUTED.

DAYTON -- As Good Samaritan Hospital prepares to close, community health centers in the surrounding neighborhoods are preparing for the change.

Five Rivers Health Centers and Community Health Centers of Greater Dayton both have locations in the nearby neighborhoods that surround the northwest Dayton hospital that's set to close July 23.

The facilities are looking to expand some weekend hours and services to help fill the void.

The two organizations are both federally qualified health centers, which serve patients on a sliding-fee scale based on ability to pay and in turn receive higher federal reimbursements. They are governed by boards that have patients as the majority of the board members.

While neither is equipped to replace major hospital services like the emergency department or maternity unit, the leaders of the two groups see ways they can serve the community's needs going forward.

There have always been patients who use the Good Samaritan ER as a stand in for a primary care doctor, said Gregg Hopkins, executive director of Community Health Centers of Greater Dayton. Patients could benefit by both using a primary care doctor with their health system instead and also from getting regular primary care visits, which could help prevent a health condition escalating into a hospital visit.

"Every hospital has patients that utilize the emergency room for primary care. Here's an opportunity now to hopefully get these patients to come to a medical home instead of just finding a new emergency room," Hopkins said.

Hopkins said one of the challenges of his community health network faces is awareness, so he would like to build awareness of the group's health services as an option.

Kim Bramlage, Five Rivers Health Centers marketing and communications manager, said when the health center did focus groups one thing that came up was patients wanted there to be an urgent care center or emergency room closer to where they live.

Expanding weekend hours

While Five Rivers can't fill that void, Bramlage said they have decided to start having hours two Saturdays a month. The hours are 8 a.m. to noon the first and third Saturdays of every month.

"So it means more opportunities for existing and new patients to come in," she said.

In addition, she said the health center has received feedback from residents that they don't always know what health resources are available or who to contact about different services.

To respond to this, Five Rivers Health Centers will work with interns from Wright State University starting in August to go out into the community to talk with residents and give out a guide on health services that they can keep as a resource.

"We're going to start sending them out into the community to talk to residents and find out what their needs are. Do they have a primary care physician? Do they have questions? Or need help figuring out Medicare and Medicaid information?"

Pregnancy services

Five Rivers also just launched a "CenteringPregnancy" group at its Philadelphia Drive office. The program brings together a small group of pregnant women with

similar due dates who regularly meet together for prenatal checks and peer support.

The evidence-based model is associated with increasing the health of babies and lowering infant mortality.

Five Rivers already hosts the popular program at its Center for Women's Health office on Miami Valley Hospital's campus. Bramlage said they already have their first group started at the Philadelphia Drive office.

"There's a population of moms out there that it's not as convenient to go to Center for Womens' Health," she said.

Five Rivers Health Centers is headquartered at 2261 Philadelphia Drive on Good Samaritan's campus and will remain after the hospital closes.

Greater Dayton Area Community Health Centers has two nearby locations, **Victor Cassano Health Center** at 1323 W. Third St., and **Dr. Charles R. Drew Health Center** at 165 S. Edwin C. Moses Blvd.

Facts & Figures

17,886: Total Community Health Centers patients served in 2017

25,000: Total Five Rivers Health Centers patients served in 2017

58,070: Total Community Health Centers patient visits in 2017

84,307: Total Five Rivers Health Centers patient visits in 2017