

This is Jennifer Budwig with today's community comment.

I'd like to take a few minutes to discuss healthcare in the Eel River Valley. As we all are aware, healthcare delivery systems in general have been continually evolving with implementation of the Affordable Care Act. It is no longer reasonable to expect that primary care needs of a community can be addressed by individual doctors working in solo private practices. Recruitment and retention of practitioners to our area has been a continuous challenge. This, coupled with several doctors retiring recently, has continued to put an increasing burden on our existing practitioners who are now being stretched upon capacity.

Over the last two years, Humboldt Medical Group and the former Redwood Internal Medicine practices have been absorbed into the Open Door Clinic. The Ferndale facility was relocated into a fully refurbished office with state of the art technology, however the two Fortuna offices (known as Fortuna Community Health Center) are currently operating in the same location. The Fortuna facilities just can't support the ever increasing demand for primary care. In light of this, community members in the ERV approached Open Door and asked them to consider constructing a state of the art facility in Fortuna, similar to their Eureka site, for which they have agreed. It is an estimated \$12MM project, which will require a combination of federal loans, local foundation grants and support from residents in the community. The McLean Foundation has agreed to donate \$2MM towards this project, leaving an additional \$3MM to be raised. Local community partners have banded together to raise this additional \$3MM with a formal launch of this fundraising campaign to be held in October.

If you are wondering if this facility will compete with Redwood Memorial Hospital, the answer is quite the opposite. The ongoing success of the hospital is tied to their ability to recruit and retain providers including both primary care and specialists. This new facility will provide this since more and more health care providers are looking for larger organizations that have the prospect of support, collaboration and access to technology. Open Door is doing critically important work to build this new state of the art center which will stabilize primary care in the community and ensure the continuing success of RMH.

The facility plan is under way. The property is secure and will be constructed on a 5 acre site that will be within walking distance of Redwood Memorial Hospital. The building will be a two story, 30,000 square foot building that will consist of 40 medical exam rooms and access to telemedicine worldwide plus include 10 dental operatories. The estimated date of completion is December, 2017. It is anticipated the new facility will provide capacity to serve up to 75% of the Eel River Valley's 25K+ population, plus improve practitioner recruitment efforts, increase efficiencies and provide a comprehensive range of medical, dental and behavioral health services.

Open Door has been serving patients in Humboldt County for nearly 45 years. They now have 13 health centers, over 500 employees and serve more than 75K patients in Humb and Del Norte Counties. This new facility will be a natural extension of their existing facilities in Fortuna and is truly a collaborative effort between them and the community. Upon completion, it is anticipated the new Health Center will more than double the primary care capacity in the Eel River valley resulting in more patients receiving the quality and comprehensive health care needed. This project will be a great benefit to the Eel River Valley and Humboldt County as a whole.

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