

This is Lauren Correll of the McLean Foundation with a Community Comment. Most people know and understand that it is a challenge to see a medical provider here in our rural area of Humboldt County. Getting in to see someone at a doctor's office in a timely fashion is challenging. Trying to establish care as a new patient in the Eel River Valley... that is a downright daunting task. Over 7 doctors in our local area have retired in the last 4 years. With no doctors to replace the ones that left, it has now put Eel River Valley into a healthcare crisis.

Open Door has established itself in the community by providing Humboldt County with quality health care since the 1970's and will be celebrating their 45th year serving our community. To help solve this ongoing healthcare problem, Open Door is in the process of building a new location in Fortuna, their 13th site. Currently Fortuna Open Door is operating out of two locations but is limited by physical space. To recruit more medical providers and take on more patients, a larger facility is desperately needed. Local MD, Dr. Stephanie Dittmer talks about the need for space. She is quoted in saying "We provide a special niche for young, full spectrum Family Medicine Physicians here in Humboldt County. Family Doctors do want to come here; however, there is no physical work space for them. I have to turn away physicians at this time because we do not have the physical capacity for them."

The New Fortuna Community Health Center is now starting its construction phase and if all goes well, the center will be opening in December of 2017. The new center will be a state of the art facility, including 27 medical exam rooms and 7 dental operatory. With the new building being around 30,000 square feet, space will no longer be a barrier to recruiting much needed physicians to the area.

The new location will be on a parcel of land purchased by the McLean Foundation. The center will be located in close proximity to Redwood Memorial Hospital allowing for collaboration between the two facilities to provide the best possible care to the residents that live in and around the Eel River Valley. The importance of this new facility is best described by Dr. David O'Brien, president of St. Joseph Health, he states it is a way to stabilize primary care in the community and ensure the continuing success of Redwood Memorial Hospital.

Open Door will break ground on the New Fortuna Community Health Center on August 8th and everyone is invited to join. Feel free to call the McLean Foundation at 707-725-1722 for more information about the new Fortuna Community Health Center. This project will help improve the health of ourselves, our family and our community.

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