

Partnership Health Center news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PARTNERSHIP HEALTH CENTER CELEBRATES NEW BUILDING
Missoula's community health clinic sets ribbon-cutting for Creamery Building for Jan. 13

Everyone's invited to a ribbon-cutting and celebration of Partnership Health Center's new home in the historic Creamery Building in downtown Missoula on Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 3:30 p.m. Mayor John Engen will join PHC executive director Kim Mansch, County Commissioner Bill Carey, representatives of Senator Max Baucus, Senator Jon Tester and Congressman Denny Rehberg in inaugurating the newly remodeled space at 401 W. Railroad St. Following the ceremony, staff members will be on hand to give guided tours for the public until 5 p.m.

The new home is only one block from PHC's current clinic and offices at Orange and West Alder Streets. Its first function is an expanded dental clinic, which has nine chairs with room for expansion to 12 chairs. Dental care is a critical need that is disturbing in its magnitude for PHC's patients. Access to dental care among Missoula's low-income people is a severe challenge and dental pathology is advanced and widespread.

"We're so happy to be able to serve more people in Missoula in a beautiful new clinic," Mansch said. "Being able to go from six dental chairs to nine chairs will greatly improve access and create a positive impact for our community."

The Creamery Building, built between 1912 and 1921, is 22,558 square feet, more than twice the size of the current clinic building. Parking is ample, and there's room to expand the building in the adjoining vacant lot.

PHC used federal stimulus money to remodel about 5,000 square feet of the building for the dental clinic and the Montana Cancer Control Program (previously known as the Breast and Cervical Health Program), along with an office for one mental health provider. The American Red Cross' Blood Center occupies the downstairs of the building, and PHC is honoring its lease until June 2011. After that date, PHC's medical clinic and pharmacy will move in.

Missoula's MMW Architects designed the remodeled space, where they incorporated the historic brick and beams and classical windows of the building.

Partnership began in 1989 as a referral network to address the needs of Missoula residents who are medically underserved. The Missoula City-County Health Department collaborated with private physicians, St. Patrick Hospital, Community Medical Center, and eventually the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the U.S. Bureau of Primary Health Care to grow the original idea. It quickly outgrew small quarters in the health department and in 1992 became a Federally Qualified Health Center. The current clinic building opened in 1999, built with broad community support.

Today, the clinic is a nonprofit administered through the Missoula City-County Health Department and governed by a board of directors. It serves approximately 12,000 patients, but clinic managers are aware that figures from the Montana Primary Care Association show that 29,948 Missoula County residents did not receive basic primary care in 2006 because of economic barriers and shortages of providers. Missoula County is federally designated as a Medically Underserved Population as well as being a Health Professions Shortage Area and a Dental Health Professions Shortage Area.

“This expansion surpasses our dreams of 20 years ago when PHC got its start,” Missoula City-County Health Department Officer Ellen Leahy stated, “and it's a good thing, because the need for access to quality health care has only grown.”

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