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Beshear, others present funding for new free clinic

by CRIS RITCHIE – Editor

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HAZARD – Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear and other dignitaries were on hand Wednesday to present Kentucky Mountain Health Alliance with \$325,000 in Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funding for a new Little Flower Clinic in Hazard.

The funding will go to the renovation of an existing structure on Memorial Drive to serve as the new Little Flower Clinic, which is currently located on North Main Street.



“Today is a very exciting day for Kentucky Mountain Health Alliance,” said CEO Rosie Woolum, noting that the new facility will help expand medical coverage to homeless and uninsured patients simply by virtue of its location in downtown Hazard.



“Hopefully we can see several hundred more patients at this location,” said Woolum. “We’re next to the health department. We’re downtown in the community where people can actually walk to the clinic.”

Woolum said plans are underway to add a dental suite to the new facility, as well as the medical services currently offered. The new clinic will be able to serve an estimated 300 dental patients every year.



The Memorial Drive facility will also offer an upgrade from the 4,500 square feet clinic on North Main Street, and will offer more parking and an expansion of the lab and treatment areas.

Lt. Gov. Daniel Mongiardo, a practicing physician in Perry County, noted the hard work of several people that brought the KMHA to its current state, which he said could be a model

for other parts of the country to bring health care to people who currently don't have access.

"It works, and it works great because there's cooperation," Mongiardo said. "It's very gratifying the see that cooperation. This couldn't happen with any one person. This happens because of a lot of work by a lot of people."

More importantly, Mongiardo continued, more people will have access to health care because of Little Flower Clinic, something he said that should already be available to everyone.

"We're in the heart of Appalachia, and Appalachia is one of the highest areas of underinsured Americans in the country, so something like this, it's a natural that it would develop here," he said. "But it's unfortunate that we have to have a free clinic. Every American should have access to quality health care, but this fills the gaps. It's a safety net for those who don't have access."

Health care is a basic service, yet many people don't have that access, added Gov. Beshear, who noted the gratification of being able to come to areas like Hazard and see health care expansion in the works.

"To be a part of creating a facility like this Little Flower Clinic that is going to make health care a lot more accessible for Kentuckians in this area , it certainly warms my heart to be able to be a part of it and to bring some of the ARC money," said Beshear. "It's going to be really a great asset to the people of Perry County."

In total, the new facility project will come with a \$1.2 million price tag. Along with the ARC funding, Woolum noted help from other organizations such as the Community Foundation of Hazard and Perry County. The new clinic is estimated to be open in six months.

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