



Workers unload furniture for the Center for Healthy Living on Shiloh Road just south of St. Johns Lutheran Ministries.

Medical center won't look like clinic

Facility aiming to serve baby boomers and their parents

By DIANE COCHRAN
Photos by Larry Mayer
Of The Gazette Staff

A medical center set to open next week on the city's West End will offer a unique mix of services for aging baby boomers and their parents.

The Center for Healthy Living is meant to serve as a gathering place, fitness center, rehabilitation center and primary care outlet for people in an area officials say has the state's highest concentration of senior citizens.

The \$4 million clinic, on Shiloh Road south of Rimrock Road, is a partnership between St. Vincent Healthcare and St. John's Lutheran Ministries and doesn't look much like a traditional doctor's office.

"The design is different and purposefully so," said Mark Wakai, vice president of St. Vincent's medical practices division. "It's not institutional."

"There's not a model anywhere in the country that integrates these components," said Mike Follett, administrator of St. John's. "We want it to feel like a neighborhood and park setting, not a clinical setting."



The Virtual Health Library in the Center for Healthy Living is part of the \$4 million clinic, a partnership between St. Vincent Healthcare and St. John's Lutheran Ministries.

Even the reception desk will be different. Patients will be greeted by a concierge and won't be asked for personal information, even to schedule appointments, until they move to private areas within the building.

The clinic's spacious reception area will be outfitted with a fireplace and computer terminals connected to the Internet.

"People can come in and relax and have coffee by the fire and talk," Wakai said. "We want individuals to come to the center without having health and wellness or medical issues."

About half the 11,400-square-foot center is devoted to primary care, with four St. Vincent physicians set to begin working in eight examination rooms and a procedure room next spring.

An on-site laboratory, retail pharmacy, digital radiology center and massage room round out the clinical part of the building.

The remaining space is filled with rehabilitation and wellness services, including a walking track that will be open to the public, fitness equipment, a dizziness and balance center and a driving assessment center.

A multipurpose room will be used for yoga and pilates, wellness classes and a telemedicine link to rural medical providers.

Three St. John's physical therapists will staff the rehabilitation area, which will be connected to a transitional-care cottage set to open in July. The cottage will be modeled after others on the St. John's campus and will house 16 people recovering from illness or surgery.

A fully equipped kitchen and bathroom in the center's rehabilitation area will help therapists ready patients for returning home.

The center was built so that it can be expanded in multiple ways, said clinic manager Angela Slade. More primary care exam rooms can be added, and the rehabilitation area can be made larger.

"They really thought ahead," Slade said.

Aging? Living?

When construction started in August 2005, the Center for Healthy Living had a different name.

It was called the Center for Healthy Aging, and its primary care center was named the Sister Jane Ellen Furey Clinic.

But officials dropped the extra name for the clinic and decided the word "aging" just didn't have the right ring to it.

"As we looked at the programs we were going to offer, it was more about living," said Mark Wakai, vice president of the medical practices division at St. Vincent Healthcare.

The center was initially set to open over the summer but was delayed while officials waited for grant money to come through.

About half the center's \$4 million price tag was funded by federal grants and appropriations. St. Vincent's parent organization, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health System, paid the balance.

Services phased in

The Center for Healthy Living will open on a limited basis next week.

Services will be phased in over the next several months. Primary care appointments are expected to be available in the spring.

The clinic is on Shiloh Road south of Rimrock Road.

For information, call 237-8787.

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