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THE HOPE CENTER OPENS URBAN HEALTH CARE CENTER

2800 E. Linwood Blvd
Kansas City, MO 64128
www.hopecenterkc.org

P: 816-931-6290
F: 816-931-6142
E: info@hopecenterkc.org

Kansas City, Missouri -- With the health care discussion fresh in the mind of many Kansas City residents, The Hope Center is proud to announce the opening of Hope Family Care Center, 2800 E. Linwood, on October 1, 2009. This neighborhood-based health care center provides convenience and choice for many neighborhood residents who have limited health care options.

The neighborhood health care center will see patients Tuesdays through Saturdays between 8:30 am and 12:30 pm, providing primary care to patients with insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, and will offer sliding-scale fees for the uninsured.

Hope Family Care is a joint effort between The Hope Center and College Park Family Care Center in Johnson County.

"The Hope Family Care Center is different than other centers in that it is part of a much larger holistic vision," said Jake Latta, Hope Center Chief Operating Officer. "This vision includes a neighborhood charter school that will open in 2011, housing, a youth center, and a neighborhood church."

The reason for this vision, according to Chris Jehle, founder and CEO of the Hope Center, is that The Hope Center aims at addressing the roots of poverty, not just the symptoms.

"We envision a safe, vibrant neighborhood where people of all types flourish," said Jehle. "Our eastside community will transform from a violent, hope-starved, and declining one into a safe, pleasant place to live. Those in need will have the hope and support they need to improve their quality of life. Our community seeks to become one of the best places in the city for families to raise great kids."

Latta added, "If all our health care center does is treat people's physical illnesses, then we aren't really doing much to change the core of this neighborhood. We seek to serve the whole person, thereby affecting change in the neighborhood by changing individual lives."

College Park Family Care Center spearheaded the development of a medical center at the Hope Center. In 1991, College Park's mission statement was developed to include doing work outside the College Park practice, according to Tom Kettler, M.D., College Park Family Care co-founder.

"The board decided back then that it was important to put our money where our mouth was," Kettler said. "We started putting money into a missions fund right after that."

Until about three years ago, that missions fund was primarily used to support national and overseas missions. However, the board members at College Park knew they wanted to do something locally, Kettler in particular.

"I always wanted to work with those who needed care. I chose to do my residency in Houston at Baylor because they cared for the indigents in Harris County, Texas."

Sometime later Kettler met Jehle, and the two developed a friendship.



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"I called Chris about three years ago and asked him if medicine was part of their mission. Their board had just had a strategic meeting and felt like they definitely wanted some type of medical aspect in their vision," Kettler said.

College Park has committed to over \$500,000 over five years, which covers the build-out cost and lease for the Hope Center Family Center, and provides funding for a part-time director. College Park has also donated thousands of hours of personnel time to realize the joint vision between College Park and the Hope Center.

"This is just the right thing to do," Kettler said. "Our faith compels us to do this. Without our faith this is just another medical center."

Opening the health care center has not been without its challenges, however.

"The major hurdles have been medical malpractice issues, personnel, and funding," Kettler said.

In addition to College Park Family Care Center, over 100 local physicians and hospitals are lending their financial support to a fundraising event October 1 at the Lodge at Ironwoods Park.

"Our goal is to raise \$100,000 that night," said Mark McClung, M.D, surgeon at Associated Plastic Surgeons. "There are many physicians in town who are specialists and surgeons [not primary care physicians] who want to do something in our community, and this gives them the opportunity to do that."

Many hospitals in the Kansas City area are also getting behind the fundraising effort.

"There will be representatives from Research Hospital, St. Joseph, Shawnee Mission, University of Kansas Physicians and St. Luke's at this event," said McClung.

The long-term goal of the center is to hire a full-time physician.

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The Hope Center opened in 1998, and is a Christian community development organization that, out of a belief in God, is working diligently to renew the forgotten, impoverished east side community where CEO and Founder Chris Jehle and others live and serve. The Hope Center currently offers youth leadership training and bible studies.

Established in 1980, College Park Family Care Center has been uniting physicians in order to provide quality health care in a caring Christian environment. College Park Family Care Center is the region's premier family practice medical center. Their staff of board-certified physicians specializes in areas from Primary Care, OB/Gyn to Allergy and General Surgery.

For more information please contact:

Jake Latta - Chief Operating Officer , the Hope Center
Office: 816-931-6290
Email: jakel@hopecenterkc.org