



PRESS RELEASE

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WellFlorida secures grant for Community Health Center

WellFlorida Council partners with Hernando County to bring community health center to Brooksville. The US Department of Health and Human Services Secretary recently announced plans to award 105 new health center grants nationwide totaling more than \$63 million. Four health center grants were awarded to Florida with Hernando County on the list of recipients. Active behind the scenes in securing the grant was WellFlorida Council. The grant will provide primary care services to the medically underserved areas of Hernando County.

“WellFlorida assisted the community in gathering data to determine the need for a community health center and then analyzed and compared Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) models which would best fit our community,” said Elizabeth Callaghan, Administrator of the Hernando County Health Department.

“WellFlorida was instrumental in the success of this grant application.”

The Hernando County Health Department will receive \$650,000 a year for three years to implement and operate a community health center in Brooksville. Community health centers deliver preventive and primary care services to patients regardless of their ability to pay. Charges for healthcare services are based on a sliding scale according to income.

To qualify for a federally funded community health center, a community must demonstrate a shortage of primary care physicians and have at least 44% of the population living below 200% of the federal poverty level. In addition to meeting those guidelines, Hernando County faced the challenge of having 23% of its residents uninsured.

“The FQHC will have a significant impact on the health disparities we face in Hernando County,” Callaghan said. It will increase cost effectiveness in healthcare by lowering hospital admission rates, shortening lengths of hospital stays and reduce the unnecessary use of hospital emergency rooms. Because of early entry into

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prenatal care, we will have fewer low weight births. Uninsured patients, who often delay seeking medical care, will be able to access appropriate care and medication. Additionally, by emphasizing prevention, the FQHC will increase participation in preventative screenings such as mammograms and offer counseling on diet, physical activity, smoking, drinking, drug use and sexually transmitted diseases.”

WellFlorida Council conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment for Hernando County in 2001, which identified certain ZIP code areas as medically underserved. Gaps in healthcare services in the area were also identified, including: lack of access to medications; shortage of medical and social services; lack of health insurance. WellFlorida then researched and wrote the grant for the community health center.

For information on applying for a FQHC, please contact Jeff Feller at WellFlorida (352-955-2264 ext. 313 or jfeller@wellflorida.org).

For more information about WellFlorida Council, visit our website: <http://www.wellflorida.org>

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Formerly North Central Florida Health Planning Council