

PRESS RELEASE

Unique Coalition to Provide Primary Care in Medically Underserved Community of Gretna

October 20, 2004

CONTACT

Mehran Heravi (850) 459-7376 or mmh3999@fsu.edu .

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - Access to health care in Gadsden County has taken a great leap forward this fall, thanks to a unique partnership involving two universities, city and county officials, the county health department, a student group and a local nonprofit organization.

The new partnership will celebrate the grand opening of the Gretna Wellness Center on:

THURSDAY, OCT. 21

5 P.M. TO 6:30 P.M.

GRETNA WELLNESS CENTER, 14678 MAIN ST., GRETNA

The center seeks to reduce health disparities in rural, medically underserved communities like Gretna through culturally appropriate primary care, health education, and disease prevention activities that empower residents to take control of their own health. In 1999, the Gretna Wellness Center began by offering adult primary care services provided by nursing and nurse practitioner students from Florida A & M University through a cooperative agreement with FAMU's School of Nursing, the Big Bend Area Health Education Center and the Gadsden County Health Department. Now the center and its founders, joined by the City of Gretna and Gadsden County, will offer significantly expanded services through a partnership that includes FSU's College of Medicine and School of Social Work along with Community Medical Outreach Inc., an organization of FSU pre-med students sponsored by Thagard Student Health Center. This fall, pediatric services will be offered at the clinic for the first time through the medical school's Pediatric Outreach Program. Medical students and faculty will provide pediatric primary care, funded in part with nearly \$70,000 raised by the 2003 FSU Dance Marathon to help local children. Meanwhile, students in Community Medical Outreach have developed a series of Saturday clinics offering health screenings, health assessments, limited primary care and referrals. Nursing and nurse practitioner students and faculty from FAMU will continue to serve the clinic's adult patient population. Training nursing and medical students as well as those in social work and other health sciences is a key component of the partnership's overall mission to reduce health disparities. By exposing future health care providers from FSU and FAMU to the unique health care needs of rural and underserved communities like Gretna, the coalition helps them to develop culturally competent health care skills and encourages them to consider future practice at similar sites. Gretna Wellness Center services are available to all county residents and seasonal farm workers who temporarily reside in the area. The clinic will be open several days a week, and services will be coordinated by referral, when appropriate, to providers from the Gadsden County Health Department, Gadsden Medical Center, or private practitioners, depending upon patient preference, medical needs and availability of health insurance. To learn more about Thursday's grand opening of the Gretna Wellness Center contact Mehran Heravi, founder and president of Community Medical Outreach: (850) 459-7376 or mmh3999@fsu.edu .