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Primary care, FSU-style, arrives in southwest Tallahassee

BY: [RON HARTUNG](#) | PUBLISHED: [MAY 10, 2019](#) | 5:04 PM



□ (Left to right) Jason Rybicki, vice president of FSU PrimaryHealth's community advisory board; Daniel Van Durme, senior associate dean for clinical and community affairs; Anicia Robinson, principal of Sabal Palm Elementary; and Johnnie Seals, a neighborhood resident and job-site superintendent for Childers Construction, cut the ribbon at the College of Medicine's new primary-care health center, FSU PrimaryHealth.

Tallahassee's newest home for primary care is ready for business, and it's wearing the FSU brand.

On May 10, the ceremonial ribbon was cut in front of the new FSU PrimaryHealth center at Roberts Avenue and Eisenhower Street in southwest Tallahassee. The 10,000-square-foot facility has 17 exam rooms, two procedure rooms, a community room, a conference room and even a children's waiting room.

The celebration was preceded by about five years of planning and painstaking work, and with the crucial participation of the neighborhoods surrounding the new center.

"This is really a major step forward for the College of Medicine in practicing what we have been teaching for the past 15 years," Senior Associate Dean Daniel Van Durme said. "We've been teaching about addressing the needs of underserved communities. We've been teaching about patient-centered care. We've been teaching students you need to deal with the community health, the population health: Look at the needs of people — not just those coming through your door but those who surround your office. We've taught it for years. This is a major step forward into actually doing it."

At a ceremony marked by muggy heat, and briefly delayed by a mega-train blocking a key intersection, the ribbon was cut by Anicia Robinson, principal of nearby Sabal Palm Elementary School; Jason Rybicki, vice president of FSU PrimaryHealth's community advisory board; and Johnnie Seals, a neighborhood resident who was job-site superintendent for Childers Construction.

Also present at the ceremony were state Rep. Lorraine Ausley, Tallahassee Mayor John Dailey, Leon County Commission Chair Jimbo Jackson, Leon Schools Superintendent Rocky Hanna and FSU Vice President for Finance and Administration Kyle Clark.

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FSU Vice President for Finance and Administration Kyle Clark touted the potential of FSU PrimaryHealth to both provide critical care to the community and to serve as an ideal opportunity for FSU medical students to gain valuable, practical experience.

“On Monday, dozens of patients will begin arriving here, and they will experience the small acts of kindness and the wisdom that a well-trained physician brings into an exam room,” Clark said. “In turn, our patients will teach our medical students valuable lessons about how to be compassionate community physicians.”

The building itself reflects the College of Medicine’s emphasis on being part of a medical team. In its center is a giant space they’re calling The Island — where all of the medical staff will be. No separate nursing stations. No separate doctors’ offices. Everyone works out of this central hub.

“This is our collective shared office,” Van Durme said.

The center will provide a perfect setting for students to be immersed in the team approach — not just M.D. and physician assistant students from FSU but also social work students from Florida A&M University.

It’s not as if College of Medicine students don’t get clinical experience already. Right from the start, they get hands-on experience with providers and patients. In their third and fourth years, they learn alongside community physicians throughout the state, often one-on-one. This new center will provide one more opportunity for such learning, and let students see more of their faculty members interacting with patients.

“We wanted a tangible place for our faculty members to practice,” College of Medicine Dean John P. Fogarty told the crowd. “And what better place to do that — to demonstrate the mission of the College of Medicine, to serve the underserved and serve the rural poor — than to come out to a portion of Tallahassee that doesn’t have much medical care?”



□ *College of Medicine Dean John P. Fogarty delivers remarks ahead of the ribbon-cutting ceremony for FSU PrimaryHealth.*

On any given day, the center will have three licensed medical providers on

hand. All will be College of Medicine faculty members. Also there will be faculty members who specialize in behavioral health.

FSU PrimaryHealth is tailored to the needs of the four neighborhoods around it: Seminole Manor, The Meadows, Mabry Manor and the Providence Community. Yet all residents in the Tallahassee area and beyond are welcome, Van Durme said.

“We knew when we decided to do this that there’s a critical need for more primary-care physicians in Leon County,” he said. “We heard from countless patients that they can’t find a primary doc, or ‘That doc is no longer taking new patients,’ or ‘This doctor is not taking any new Medicare patients.’”

The center takes all major insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid. Van Durme said he expected that within a year, as many as 15,000 area residents might be calling FSU PrimaryHealth their medical home.

Jackson, who is also principal of Fort Braden School, compared his school’s population to that of Sabal Palm.

“It’s a school full of needs, needs that can’t be addressed just at school,” he said. “We know that the children who are sick, in families that can’t afford health care, not only do they not perform well on standardized tests, but they don’t perform well day-to-day. This sort of resource coming to the District 2 community is something that really excites me. This is a state-of-the-art facility.”

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