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Faith, health care communities come together to help needy

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com 3 hrs ago

A partnership involving Commonwealth Health Corp.'s Community Clinic, Western Kentucky University, The Foundry Christian Community Center and State Street United Methodist Church will soon be providing much-needed health care screenings and other services to residents of Bowling Green's west end.

Through a \$24,000 grant from the Good Samaritan Foundation that is a ministry of the Kentucky Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, the partners are launching a project called Bridge to Faith and Wellness that will address health and wellness issues in the community near The Foundry on West 11th Avenue.

Many residents of the west end face poverty and language barriers that make it difficult to access health care, according to an executive summary of the grant put together by WKU School of Nursing Assistant Professor Marian Smith on behalf of State Street UMC.

The Bridge to Faith and Wellness aims to address those needs through funding from this grant and utilization of the Allen Building across from State Street UMC, The Foundry, the Community Clinic and WKU's mobile health unit.

Smith said plans call for health screenings, flu clinics and health fairs to be held at The Foundry, the Allen building and the Community Clinic as part of the grant.

The Foundry Executive Director Rick Bard said the Bridge to Faith and Wellness has the potential to meet many pressing needs in the community served by The Foundry.

“The alignment with our mission is right on target,” Bard said. “That mission is focused on education, health and wellness and spiritual development.”

Bard said The Foundry meets many wellness needs through a community garden, a soccer field and a gymnasium. But he said health care can be out of reach for many of the families he serves.

“We have some people who don’t have health insurance, and just getting to services is a problem for many,” he said. “Providing services on-site will make preventative care much more accessible.”

Smith calls the Bridge initiative a “faith-based health ministry,” but she envisions WKU student nurses and medical students at the new University of Kentucky College of Medicine-Bowling Green providing some of the services.





Having so many partners who will provide health care screenings, education and transportation services makes the initiative unique, Bard said.

“This is based on partnerships with the Community Clinic, the faith community and nonprofits,” Bard said. “It will be tremendously helpful. Access is a big issue for families served by The Foundry, whether it be access to groceries or access to health care.”

Carla Reagan, executive director of the Community Clinic, said the Bridge project will “definitely be a benefit” to the population served by The Foundry and could help deliver health care services to others as well.

Bard expects the services to continue with funding from the UMC’s Good Samaritan Foundation beyond this initial grant.

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Don Sergent