

Laredo Morning Times

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2005
A NEAREST NEIGHBOR



ON THE WEB: LMTONLINE.COM
50¢

LAREDO | HEALTH CARE

Ceremony touts \$11 million clinic

“ We began as a relatively small migrant clinic and now we are building this large, 64,000 square foot facility.”

GATEWAY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
CEO MIGUEL TREVIÑO



Photo by Cuate Santos | Laredo Morning Times

Jose Camacho, right, executive director of Texas Association of Community Health Center, Inc., talks to Gateway Community Health Center, Inc., board member Lauro Garcia, as they prepare to break ground for a new clinic Wednesday. Other board members in background are, Rolando Gutierrez, left and Alfonso Perez.

LAREDO MORNING TIMES

The Gateway Community Health Center is aiming to open its new three-story, \$11 million facility by next August.

“We began as a relatively small migrant clinic and now we are building this large, 64,000 square foot facility to better serve Laredo and its surrounding communities,” said Miguel Treviño, CEO of Gateway Community Health Center at the new center’s groundbreaking Wednesday morning.

The new center will be located at the corner of Pappas and Foster, near the Laredo Medical Center. The center will save \$4 million within the next decade in financing the project as Gateway obtained a zero percent interest loan from Laredo’s First National Bank to build the facility.

“The new state-of-the-art primary health care center is designed to expand the delivery of services,” Treviño said.

Gateway Community Health Center maintains two service sites, providing services such as a dental clinic, radiology, social services, family planning, HIV/AIDS testing and counseling, health education, nutrition counseling, transportation assistance, and a migrant entitlement program.

The non-profit center, which started operations in 1963, has seen its returning patient numbers rise to 17,000 last year, along with another peak in the number of overall visits in the center’s history.

In 2004, Gateway Community had more than 72,174 medical, dental and special clinical patient visits, up by more than 5,000 from 2003.

Treviño said that increase helped fuel the idea to build the clinic next to the Laredo Medical Center as a method of easing current patient traffic at LMC and Doctor’s Hospital.

Both hospitals are currently burdened with too many people seeking help after hours. Gateway officials said 50 percent of the visits to the emergency room are not critical.

“The new center is going to give us more space to hire more dental and medical providers and support staff to serve the extremely large number of people in Webb County that have no health insurance,” said Lowell Woodward, chief operating officer and deputy director for the center. “We’ll be better able to immediately handle and maintain patients in the next three years.”

The Gateway Community Health Center’s current main clinic is at 2309 Saunders St. and can be contacted at 795-8163. The South Clinic, at 2007 South Zapata Highway, can be reached at 795-8101.

Last year, Gateway started offering prenatal care for colonia residents from a specially equipped mobile unit.

“With the opening of this clinic, the Gateway Community Health Center is contributing to the addition to doctors along the Texas-Mexico border, which has been medically underserved,” said Kay Bailey Hutchinson in a statement read at the groundbreaking. “The health issues that arise along our border with Mexico are truly unique to the area.”

(Francisco Vara-Orta can be reached by phone (956) 728-2562 or by e-mail fvara@lmtonline.com) reached by phone (956) 728-2562 or by e-mail fvara@lmtonline.com)