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Photo courtesy North County Health Services

By Ruarri Serpa on Fri, Feb 27, 2015

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funded by \$7 million in grants and donations, North County Health Services constructed a new pediatrics center at their site on Mission Ave. and Mesa Drive.

The modern medical center opened its doors on Feb. 16, doubling the size of NCHS's medical home for mothers and children.

“We spent 20 years at Suite 12,” said Andrea Chavez, health center manager. “This doubled the number of exam rooms to 18.”

NCHS's long history at the location on Mesa Drive and Mission Ave. was important for continuing to operate in the same location, said Elvira Ogletree, the clinic's director.

"It had been so long standing, and we want patients to feel like they are coming to their medical home," Ogletree said.

Chavez explained that women typically come to the Mission Mesa center during their pregnancy, go to Tri-City Medical Center for the birth with a NCHS midwife, and come back to Mission Mesa for pediatric care.

The biggest group who make Mission Mesa their medical home are young mothers between 18- and 30-years old, who walk or take public transportation from nearby neighborhoods.

"It fills an important role in the Oceanside area, specifically because a lot of people are uninsured, underinsured, or people are on Medi-Cal," Amy Ventetulo, communications director, said.

According to Ventetulo, nearly 18 percent of Oceanside residents lacked insurance before the start of Covered California at the end of 2013, with that number increasing to 25 percent in the area around Mission Mesa.

The new building has an office to register patients for programs like Covered California, which ended on Feb. 20, and Medi-Cal, for which they still are enrolling.

On the operations side, the clinic also houses a room for performing procedures, a conference room for health education programs and group socializing sessions, and an expanded room to perform immunizations.

According to Chavez, the Mission Mesa clinic performs the second highest number of child immunizations within the NCHS network of clinics, and used to operate out of a space no larger than a small closet.

As the demand for other pediatric services like tests and checkups grew, less and less space was available for administration.

Chavez said that offices were turned into examination rooms, patients and staff had to share one set of bathrooms, and staff used to meet in the reception area before patients arrived in the morning.

The new building has more bathrooms and the conference room, but also a lounge for the staff, all of which contributes greatly to the quality of the workplace, according to Chavez.

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