

Spotlight on the Safety Net

A Community Collaboration

James D. Bernstein Community Health Center

In early March, local and statewide leaders gathered in Greenville, North Carolina to dedicate the James D. Bernstein Community Health Center. The center was founded on the premise that a person's health depends on much more than just access to health care. This multipurpose facility is designed to integrate professional and community educational programs, job training, and social support systems, as well as health services. These services are tailored to the unique needs of rural, low-income families.



The concept was born out of a sense of community need expressed by Pitt Partners for Health, a Healthy Carolinians partnership. Local safety net providers, agencies, and volunteer groups came together four years ago to form the Eastern Carolina Community Health Care Consortium. That group envisioned a new kind of health center to be named after Jim Bernstein, the founder of the state's

and the nation's first Office of Rural Health. The land and site work was donated by E. R. Lewis Construction and the building is owned by Access East, an independent 501(c)3 organization formed by Pitt County Memorial Hospital and East Carolina University to house indigent care programs. The lease for the building is only \$1 a year plus maintenance. Greene County Health Care, Inc, a federally qualified health center which has won national recognition for its innovative programs, is charged with the operation of the health component of the center including full medical and dental services. Pitt Community College is responsible for the coordination of educational programs including current courses in health information management, dental hygiene, and radiation technology. East Carolina University Brody School of Medicine operates the pharmacy, which offers 340b (lowest available costs) pricing and access to all pharmaceutical company assistance programs. The East Carolina University School of Nursing and Department of Child Development and Family Relations also provide medical and behavioral health services at the center.

Jim Bernstein, the center's namesake, was a tireless, unselfish and brilliant advocate for North Carolina's rural poor and medically underserved. His office founded the first rural health center in the state, located only twenty miles from the site of the newly dedicated Bernstein Community Health Center. That center, the Walstonburg Community Health Program, has become a part of Greene County Health Care, Inc, a network of seven clinics.

In that same spirit, those who have worked hard to bring the center into existence follow the motto by Thomas G. Irons, MD, "We will do what's right, do it well, and do it together."

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