

# Family Medical Care open to area residents



Emily R. Eberlin

**OPENS ITS DOORS** – Family Medical Care, which opened April 1, is operating out of 3032 West St. However, the health care center for residents of the Tri-State Area may eventually occupy the second floor of this building, the former Simon's Furniture Gallery, also on West Street, to better accommodate its increasing patient load.

## Health center will move to bigger facility

By **EMILY R. EBERLIN**  
Staff writer

A Weirton healthcare center has received hearty welcomes since opening its doors April 1, without discrimination, to tri-state area citizens.

Individuals from West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio are being examined at Family Medical Care, currently operating at 3032 West St., regardless of their residency, income level and amount of insurance.

"Family Medical Care is committed to providing primary medical health care, receiving all individuals with dignity and respect within a caring environment," said Judy Raveaux, the executive director of Family Medical Center and CHANGE Inc.

CHANGE, Inc. is a longstanding community-action agency

that provides services to people, usually to those living in Hancock, Brooke, Ohio and Marshall counties.

Since expanding its service area, however, CHANGE, Inc. has been introduced to new patients from West Virginia's bordering states. The health care facility has seen 238 new patients, 36 percent from Ohio, since it went from CHANGE, Inc. Health Care Clinic to Family Medical Center to assist additional individuals in receiving medical attention.

"The need for low-cost health care in the Northern Panhandle is tremendous, and CHANGE, Inc. feverishly searched for an alternative; a way to more effectively help the thousands of patients that are coming through the doors; a way to continue to help the uninsured and low-income residents of the Ohio Valley," Raveaux said.

In June 2004, CHANGE Inc. was contacted by Gov. Bob Wise's administration about transforming its free clinic into a Federally Qualified Healthcare

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Center, which CHANGE Inc. and its board agreed to better reach people who lost their jobs, pensions and health care in the past year.

Raveaux said the new status "provides a relief to the community, while allowing the agency to continue to serve the patients it initially opened its doors to; those without insurance and without the income to medically care for their families and themselves."

Raveaux explained that a FQHC offers patients "access to quality health care based on a sliding scale, which is derived from the patient's income level, and therefore, would enable all members of the community to obtain affordable medical care."

Currently, Family Medical Center is a sliding-scale health center where all residents of the Tri-State area can be seen by medical professionals. The sliding scale was set by the nine-member governing board for the center. Fifty-one percent of the board is made up of Family Medical Center patients.

"FQHC's have become a very important asset to the communities they serve and the nation as a whole because they offer uninsured, underinsured and those with low-income a way to obtain quality health care at a very affordable price," Raveaux said.

They also accept patients with Medicare, Medicaid and third-party insurances.

The executive director added that "FQHC's have a proven record of decreasing health costs of hospitals, businesses and communities by reducing the number of emergency room visits, decreasing the length of hospital stays, lowering hospital admission rates, and decreasing infant mortality rates."

Raveaux said she is a patient at Family Medical Center because insured patients like herself help the uninsured individuals continue to receive affordable care.

The mission of the Family Medical Center staff, including Dr. Kelli Fournier and nurse practitioner Josh Kolanko, is to allow 100 percent access with zero disparity."

Family Medical Center's services include adult medicine, allergy shots, breast and cervical cancer screenings, gynecology, diabetic counseling and management, immunizations, mental health care, minor outpatient surgery, pediatrics, vision and hearing screenings and transportation.

A goal for the Family Medical Center is to relocate in the near future.

Raveaux said it is the center staff's hope to move to the second floor of the former Simon's Furniture Gallery on West Street.

"We want to make it like a mini-mall complete with more exam rooms and a pharmacy," she said. "We hope to be in our new location by the spring of 2006."

In January 2006, Raveaux said Family Medical Care will be able to purchase prescription drugs at 51 percent less than the wholesale price through the Federal 340 B program. This will allow the sliding scale to apply to prescription drugs, as well.

Raveaux said all patients of Family Medical Care will be eligible for the Federal 340 B program pricing, which could save ill individuals a great deal of money in prescription drugs.

"This could allow patients access to medications that very well may save their lives," Raveaux said.

Family Medical Center is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and closed on the weekends. For more information on Family Medical Center, including its sliding-scale fee, visit [www.familymc.org](http://www.familymc.org) or call the office at 748-2828.

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