

Virginia City News

Wednesday, November 23, 2011

The 70 mph winds that began Thursday afternoon, did not prevent locals for turning out for the grand opening of Community Chest on Carson St., in Virginia City, next to the municipal pool.

Earlier this year, there had been a grand opening of the new building, but this occasion was more of a cumulative milestone, with Health Access Washoe County, or HAWC, celebrating their new facility for primary health care services within the building, and the reins for the care and operation of the building being turned over to Storey County.

Dr. Dan Ahearn, Executive Director of HAWC, and County Commissioner Bob Kershaw, officiated the event, with Kershaw remarking, Fifteen years ago, when I was on the School Board, we could only imagine the things we could do: have a football team again - with a home field, extend the V& T to Carson City, build a new Comstock Historic Center, and construct a Community Center. We really didn't think that all these things could happen, but they have! This center is a realization for the whole community, with a myriad of services available without having to go off the hill. I'm going to Washington D.C. soon, and I'm going to try to get more money for this facility. Thank you so much to Shaun and Deborah Loesch-Griffin for making this happen!

We might have to change the name to Western rather than Washoe joked Dr. Ahearn as he related that HAWC has been serving northern Nevada since 1995, when a major medical clinic was opened, along with a homeless center. I'm pleased now that we're offering medical care in Storey, which also serves Lyon county. Besides medical, we hope to offer routine dental care, starting with hygiene and cleaning. With over 65,000 visits between Washoe, Storey and Lyon, none of this could have been done without Shaun! He then invited all the guests to take a tour of HAWC's new facility, including the waiting room, office space, patient rooms, laboratory, and dispensary, which were proudly shown by Physician Assistant Certified (PAC), Regina Pedersen.

This was a very special evening for Griffin, as he later outlined specifics regarding future plans for Community Chest and their services. This event tonight was an opportunity to have an open house for the whole community. So they could see the first half of the building, the youth side, and then HAWC's facility, and the nonprofit offices upstairs on the other half. It's the first phase of our project. The second phase is also a two-story building, about a thousand square feet larger, located on the east, with a gathering space/arts facility, a technical center with computers, that will be a learning center for the schools, and a commercial kitchen and training center.

To open this building required the work of hundreds of volunteers and many young people, who conceived this idea originally. Many, many state, local and federal agencies, plus construction people, donated their services. Miles Construction, Berger Hannafin Architects, and dozens of foundations, plus Storey County, gave their support. The

funding for the second phase will come from foundations and grants, as well as public and private sources.

As far as this building, during the last County Commissioners meeting, we formalized an agreement in which the county will henceforth own and maintain the building, while Community Chest will operate the programs.

HAWC is a tenant and the office was built specifically for their needs. They're an anchor in the building offering low-cost healthcare and a pharmacy, on a sliding scale. A Physicians Assistant is the primary provider. HAWC runs five different health centers and is not related to Community Chest.

We will be starting our youth programs soon, which include before and after school care, tutoring, service-learning, and other clubs. I'll also be spending a lot of time raising money for that second phase of our construction.

It was obvious that night that although a cold, piercing wind was blowing outside, inside Community Chest, the fire that Shaun and Deborah Loesch-Griffin had ignited to improve life for everyone in Storey County, was never going to be extinguished.

For more information about Community Chest, call 847-9311, or go to [www.communitychestnevada.net](http://www.communitychestnevada.net).

To find out more about HAWC, or schedule an appointment, call 284-3570, or 329-6300.