

Watsonville Health Center holds open house for new facility

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WATSONVILLE - The Watsonville Health Center, an affiliate of Planned Parenthood Mar Monte, has packed up its bags and moved to a newer, bigger building.

In the open house on Friday, staff gave tours and explanations of the new center, offering refreshments and answering questions.

The center offers additional rooms and services, including updated equipment and an expanded laboratory. Several exam rooms have been made handicap accessible with adjustable tables.

The previous location - which Planned Parenthood occupied from 1995 until the new center's May 27 opening - was limited to only five exam rooms. The new center has eight.

In addition to new exam rooms, there are three small interview rooms intended for consultations and other appointments that would not require a medical exam table.

"We're really excited to be moving to this bigger facility to better service the community," said Jessica Dieseldorff, nurse practitioner at the Watsonville Health Center. "We outgrew our five exam rooms a while ago."

There is also a waiting room designated for teens who are seeking the services of Planned Parenthood but would like further privacy.

"We want to be sensitive to that confidentiality," Dieseldorff said.

The Watsonville Health Center does not limit itself to women's or reproductive health but also offers general health and pediatric services. One program under way is looking at the effect of pesticide exposure on community members, specifically those who work in agriculture.

"The focus is evaluating where the need of the community lies," said Lupe Rodriguez, Planned Parenthood Mar Monte director of public affairs. "We work with a lot of communities that have concerns about pesticide exposure."

Rodriguez said that over the years, Watsonville Health Center has seen a steady increase in patients and that was the "main impetuous" that led to the location change.

In addition to an improved facility and upgraded equipment, Dieseldorff said that within the next year it is hoping to fully transition to online medical records and taking a step toward making the facility greener.

The Watsonville Health Center is at 398 S. Green Valley Road. Hours are 8:45 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Thursday. Friday, the hours are 8:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Last year, the center provided about 15,000 medical visits to more than 6,000 unique clients. With the new facility and improved services, that number is likely to rise.

"We aren't sure what the numbers are going to be but we know we'll be able to better serve the community with the expanded building," Rodriguez said.

This is the third incarnation of Planned Parenthood in Watsonville. Established in 1979 as the Clinica Mariposa, with a facility change, it became the Watsonville Health Center in 1995. Now, occupying a new building, it remains the Watsonville Health Center - an essential part of the medical community in Watsonville.

AT A GLANCE

Watsonville Health Center

The Watsonville Health Center is at 398 S. Green Valley Road. The center is open 8:45 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The center is open 8:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fridays. The center is closed Saturday and Sunday. For information, call 724-7525.