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## New Planned Parenthood health center dedicated in Spokane

Sat., June 16, 2018



**The new Planned Parenthood building on E. Indiana Ave. is seen while protesters Hilary Hammett and Mike Carpenter stand just off the property on June 15, 2018. "Women and our children deserve better than this," Hammett said. (Libby Kamrowski / The Spokesman-Review)**

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Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho dedicated its new \$5 million health center Friday afternoon in Spokane, with staff saying the modernized clinic will allow them to care for more patients and expand sex education and advocacy efforts.

The clinic is on the same site as the organization's older health center, but comes with large windows and expanded capacity: seven exam rooms, two surgical suites, two ultrasound rooms and a community education center for classes.

The prior health center saw patients in a cramped, windowless second-floor office, while Planned Parenthood's administrative work was done on the ground floor. Staff said the updated design is a huge improvement.

"We can see the outside," health center manager Emily Carpenter said.

The clinic staffs three rotating doctors, as well as nurse practitioners and medical assistants. The surgical suites are used for a number of procedures, including surgical abortions, vasectomies, tubal sterilization and follow-up biopsies and tissue removal for abnormal Pap smears, Carpenter said.

About 100 board members, supporters, donors and local politicians attended the opening.

"This is a facility that the patients deserve," said Sharon Smith, who along with her partner, Don Barbieri, contributed \$500,000 toward construction through their Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund.

Smith said she relied on Planned Parenthood for reproductive health care as a young woman. Though she loves her current gynecologist, she plans to switch back to the new health center for menopausal care, she said.

“I’m going to be so proud to come here,” she said.

Karl Eastlund, CEO of Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho, said the organization is looking at ways to expand its health care presence in Eastern Washington and may begin offering primary health care and mental health care at the Spokane center.

“A lot of patients talk about not being able to get their other medical care,” he said.

Of the 11 health centers Planned Parenthood operates in Eastern Washington, the Spokane facility is the only one that offers surgical abortions, Eastlund said. Others offer medication abortions, where a patient takes a drug to induce miscarriage, but that can only be done up to about 10 weeks of pregnancy.

Patients travel from Idaho and Montana every week for surgical abortions in Spokane, which are done up to the 18th week of pregnancy, Eastlund said.

About 25 anti-abortion protesters lined the sidewalk outside the center during the event, many holding signs saying “Pray to End Abortion.”

Faith Howard, who said she protests outside Planned Parenthood weekly, had signed up online to attend the opening to “ask some tough questions.” She refused to leave the center after staff told her she wasn’t welcome. She later was escorted off the property by police.

Planned Parenthood has a policy of not allowing protesters on its property, staff said. Other protesters remained on the sidewalk.

Construction on the health center began in spring 2016, and Carpenter said they began seeing patients in November while construction was still underway.

Stacey and Betsy Cowles donated \$250,000 toward the health center through the Harriet Cheney Cowles Foundation to honor their mother, Allison Cowles, who served on the local Planned Parenthood board.

The Cowles family owns Cowles Co., which publishes The Spokesman-Review.

Planned Parenthood raised \$2.8 million of its \$4 million goal in private donations to fund construction and will continue accepting donations through December 2020.

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Tags: health, planned parenthood, Spokane

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