

## Planned Parenthood of Asheville announces acquisition of permanent medical home

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After renting a building on Biltmore Avenue for about 15 years, Planned Parenthood's Asheville Health Center will begin providing sexual and reproductive health services in a permanent setting by the end of the year.

Speaking to the nearly 100 people who paid \$135 to attend the nonprofit's fundraising event on Thursday night in downtown Asheville, Planned Parenthood's interim CEO **Bonnie Smith** told the crowd, "After 35 years in Asheville, we have leased and we have rented, and we have moved from one facility to the other. Now, we will have the permanence and stability that comes from owning a health center." After cheers and applause from the audience, she continued, "It will enable us to meet the challenges of health care reform and, most importantly, it will ensure that we will continue the Planned Parenthood promise for generations to come."

Though the exact location of the future health center has not been disclosed at this time, **Nina Rajagopalan**, development resource associate for Planned Parenthood, said securing the building has been part of a long-term vision for the local affiliate.

"We see such a need in this community, not just in Asheville, but in areas surrounding Asheville. From teens to women in their teens, 30s and 40s, people rely on these

services; and family planning is a crucial part of comprehensive health care,” Rajagopalan explained.

Medical director of Planned Parenthood Health Services Dr. **Donna Burkett** shared that expanding into a new space will not only improve space for patients, but will potentially result in expansion and diversification of services.

However, the evening event did not focus solely on the announcement about the nonprofit’s transition from renting space to owning a building. The fundraiser, billed as a celebration of the nonprofit’s 35 years in Asheville, included a keynote address from actress and advocate **Kathleen Turner**.



Before starring in movies like “Romancing the Stone” (1984), “Body Heat” (1981) and “The War of the Roses” (1989), the now 59-year-old actress had another passion: advocating for women’s health. After going to Planned Parenthood for contraception and information when she was attending college in Missouri, she shared, “I decided right then and there, frankly, that I would give back.” So she began volunteering for Planned Parenthood. When she transferred to study at the University of Maryland, she continued to volunteer. Even when she moved to New York, she volunteered in Chelsea.

However, Turner said she worries that the same spirit may be missing in the younger generation at a time when the fight for women’s reproductive rights isn’t over. “To me, now, this issue is greater even than pro-choice because now it is pro-health.”

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