

Woman charged with battery outside Rockford's newly opened abortion clinic

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ROCKFORD, Ill. (WIFR) - Rockford is an epicenter for a heated debate over the opening of an abortion clinic. But despite protests in the streets, and legal challenges against the city, the facility on Auburn Street is officially open for patients.

"I'd rather be doing medical stuff, than political stuff, it has been an interesting journey," said Dr. Dennis Christensen, the clinic's owner. "I'm glad that we are able to open the doors, I'm disappointed it took so long to do it."

Nearly six months after Christensen announced his plans to open the clinic, the center officially opened its doors, under the name RFD Family Planning, Tuesday.

"We've got the technology, we've got the experience," said Dr. Christensen. "We have the tools, this should not be a political issue."

However, post-Roe, abortion has caused a divide across the country, and become a catalyst for protests here in the Forest City. Just hours after the clinic officially opened its doors, an anti-abortion protest ended with one woman charged with battery, according to the Rockford Police Department.

Nataly Rivera, 26, of Rockford, is accused of throwing a cup of coffee at and attempting to knock the phone out of the hand of an anti-abortion activist outside the clinic.

"It's unfortunate that a pro-lifer was attacked," said Rockford Family Initiative President Kevin Rilott. "But, we understand that when you stand up and defend life, things like this may happen."

Despite the encounter, Rilott says the rallies by the Rockford Family Initiative, won't stop.

"The only intention of the business is to end human life," said Rilott.

"We will have people out there on a regular basis, we'll offer help to mothers in need."

But while Christensen understands it is people's first amendment right to protest outside the clinic, he asks that they don't get in the way of him serving his patients.

"In the 50,000 patients I've personally treated, I haven't had one come back and say 'I wish I hadn't had the abortion,'" said Dr. Christensen.

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