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Expansion dream becomes reality

A huge expansion project that was 11 years in the making has come to fruition at NorWest Community Health Centres in Thunder Bay. The expansion will allow them to operate with more health promotion and prevention programs including community kitchens, parenting programs and therapeutic groups. Attending the new reception area are, from left, Laura White, Tanya Gottred, Tracy Komoski and Marjorie Ulmanis.

Expansion to allow more clients

More space will allow provision of 'incredible care'

BY SANDI KRASOWSKI
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Patients no longer have to cram into a small waiting room and wait for an examination at the NorWest Community Health Centres thanks to an \$8-million expansion.

The centre hosted a grand opening on Thursday and dedicated the Shoe Makers Garden to the businesses from the area's past.

The Famous Shoe shop was demolished to make way for the much needed expansion.

The centre's CEO, Wendy Talbot, said they have doubled their size and are taking on patients in a more comfortable, spacious and technologically enhanced centre.

"The project was 11 years in the making with negotiations with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care," she said. "We were desperately overcrowded."



The front lobby has been expanded for the comfort and privacy of the patients.

Talbot said the expansion will allow them to operate with more health promotion and prevention programs including community kitchens, parenting programs, and therapeutic groups.

"We have increased the number of patient examination rooms, foot care rooms and many programs which in turn, has increased our clinical efficiencies and will eventually allow us to take in more clients," she said.

About 130 NorWest Community Health Centres staff, (65 of them in Thunder Bay) provide health care to more than 20,000 patients across the district.

The centres are located in 24 mobile locations with permanent clinics in Long Lac and Armstrong. The outreach program service expands west to Upsala, and east to Karamat in Scarborough, Ont.

"We run a lot of mobile health and foot-care programs with nurse practitioners," said Talbot.

Here in Thunder Bay, the centre partners with many other organizations including the Sister Margaret Smith Centre, Thunder Bay Detoxification Centre and Shelter House.

"There is certainly a need for health care that we provide to some of the most complex and compromised individuals and populations in the city," Talbot said.

"We provide service to homeless people, to seniors and individuals with mental health and



PHOTOS BY SANDI KRASOWSKI/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL



The are plenty of examination rooms for all patients at the NorWest Community Health Centres.

addiction problems, and we do a lot of work with diabetic patients and chronic disease management."

She said the centre also runs programs for parents, couples therapy, anger management and provides services for the indigenous population by running craft groups and other special programming.

"We are also the recognized LGBT health-care provider in

the city," said Talbot. "With all these groups, we needed a bigger place and as these populations expand, we needed a place to put them all."

She added that their clients and patients have expanded "exponentially" over the last 20 years.

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