

Mt. MORRIS AWAITS NEW HEALTH CENTER

By Cara Host, Staff writer chost@observer-reporter.com

MT. MORRIS — will finally get its medical center later this month (August). A new community health center operated by Cornerstone Care and Primary Care Center of Mt. Morris is supposed to open in about two weeks.



Mt. Morris Cornercare Health Center

"I think everyone in the community is excited about it. It's been talked about for years, but now it's finally happening," said Bob MtJoy, chief executive officer of Cornerstone Care.

Nurse practitioner Mona Counts started a small clinic in Mt. Morris nearly 20 years ago. Her Primary Care Center has long outgrown its current facility, a small building on Route 19 that used to be part of a used car lot, and she has been working on bringing a bigger health care center to Mt. Morris for at least the past six years.

The 12,000-square-foot building is being built on about an acre of land on Locust Street extension, just off Mt. Morris exit of Interstate 79. The facility will offer primary care services, basic lab services, such as urinalysis and blood work, as well as dental clinic.

Greene County native Dr. Bill Minor, a family doctor with nearly 30 years of experience, likely will serve as the physician at the office. Minor also will work at Cornerstone Care's clinic in Rogersville. The Mt. Morris facility also will have several nurse practitioners and other medical personnel on staff.

"We expect it to be a very busy practice," MtJoy said, noting that the clinic's location would be convenient to people in southern Greene County as well as northern West Virginia.

MtJoy said the building still needs a lot of work to be finished in time for a planned Aug. 15 opening. Construction started last fall. "We're scrambling a bit to get everything done, but it is going to be a very nice, state-of-the-art facility that I think the whole Mt. Morris community will be proud of," he said.

Construction on the center was funded through a combination of federal and state grants as well as local contributions. Cornerstone Care received \$2.6 million in federal stimulus funds, which was partially used on the Mt. Morris project, and it also received a \$200,000 state grant earlier this year for the dental clinic.

Cornerstone Care is promoting the new health center as part of National Health Center Week, which runs Aug. 7-13.

MtJoy said one of his organization's key missions is to increase access to quality health care in rural areas. The new facility in Mt. Morris and others like it help make primary care visits more convenient, which in turn can reduce overall health care costs associated with unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

The theme of National Health Center Week is "Celebrating America's Health Centers: Serving Locally, Leading Nationally."

According to Cornerstone Care, community health centers are partnerships of individuals, communities and government to meet the health needs of a community. Cornerstone Care relies on some federal funding, but it is run by a patient-majority governing board that decides how limited resources can be effectively directed to meet the health care needs of the community.