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MAJESTY CARE CLINIC GETS HELPING HANDS FROM EXCELA HEALTH

GREENSBURG, PA, October 4, 2013 ... After two years of planning, a clinic that will offer free health care to about 25,000 Westmoreland County residents who can't afford medical insurance opens this week.

The Majesty Care Clinic held its grand opening Oct. 6 at 116 E. Pittsburgh St., Greensburg, to serve a segment of the population that is often overlooked. Festivities began at noon with a bike ride intended to raise awareness as well as funds for the clinic. An open house followed from 2 to 4 p.m., with remarks by the clinic's executive director George Vollrath, Excela Health's Senior Vice President for Community and Government Relations Ron Ott, and local government officials.

As part of his comments, Ott spotlighted the partnership between Majesty and Excela Health. Most of the clinic's medical equipment was donated by the health system from storage at the Jeannette campus. In addition he' publicly recognized the physicians of Excela Health who have made a \$10,000 contribution to the clinic as well as promoted volunteer support. To date some 70 physicians, allied health professionals and nurses have signed up to staff the clinic. Among them Aster Assefa, MD, a family medicine physician practicing in Mount Pleasant and Connellsville who is also a member of the Excela Health Board of Trustees.

Dr. Assefa has been anticipating the clinic's opening. "Over my years of practice, I've encountered many people with no insurance but serious health problems ... some lost their lives. They didn't qualify for medical assistance because they made a few dollars above the federal poverty guidelines. I have always wanted to help these people. Majesty Clinic is the best opportunity to do that."

Vollrath concurred about the potential patients for clinic service. "They're making their rent, utilities and food. There's no money left over to see a doctor."

That can mean chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension go untreated. The clinic will offer primary care and chronic disease control to county residents ages 19 to 65 who don't have medical insurance and fall below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Dr. Assefa says clinic volunteerism is consistent with Excela Health's mission,

vision and values. “Giving back is one way to demonstrate how we put patients first.” She believes Excelsa’s emergency departments will be an excellent referral source, because they now have a place nearby to direct patients for free care and education, thus freeing up the EDs for true medical emergencies.

While the Affordable Care Act is intended to provide health care coverage to all Americans, Dr. Assefa and Vollrath agree there will be no shortage of recipients for clinic services. “There will always be those people who fall through the cracks whose income isn’t high enough to afford insurance, and those who aren’t sure if they qualify. I don’t think we’ll run out of patients.”

Patients will be seen by appointment only, and no drugs will be kept on site. Initially the clinic will be open a few days each week with evening hours. As utilization picks up, the hours will be expanded. Funded through donations, the clinic might one day offer dental, vision and chiropractic care, Vollrath said.

To learn more, visit majestycareclinic.org.