

NONPROFITS

HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION TO FUND LOW-COST DENTAL CLINIC

details

Call Main Street Physicians at (757) 925-1866. The clinic will be at 157 N. Main St., Suite A. Planned hours are Monday through Friday, with evening hours Wednesday until 7.

By Linda McNatt
The Virginian-Pilot

Low-cost dental care will soon be available to residents of Suffolk and western parts of South Hampton Roads, and perhaps those in Surry County and Gates County, N.C.

Obici Healthcare Foundation recently granted \$400,000 to the Peninsula Institute for Community Health to open a sliding-fee dental care clinic at Main Street Physicians downtown.

The institute, a private, nonprofit community health center, also has clinics in Newport News and Virginia Beach and operates a Healthcare for the Homeless Program on the Peninsula.

The new dental office is expected to open sometime this fall, providing dental care based on the ability to pay, said Dr. Syed Kalamuddin, DDS and CEO of the Peninsula Institute.

The clinic will focus on preventing and reducing tooth decay and treating cavities and dental infections.

"Many of our patients do have some form of insurance," Kalamuddin said.

The money from the Obici foundation will be used to support the staff for the new facility, said Michael Beachler, executive director.

Beachler, who has been with the foundation since the first of the year, said he spent several months talking with leaders in the Suffolk health care community about the lack of affordable dental care in the area.

"The public safety net in the area of dental care is much leaner than for medical care and other services," Beachler said. "In many parts of the state, there is simply a lack of providers."

Beachler said the Peninsula organization was selected for the grant because of its excellent track record in serving the medically indigent.

Renovations at Main Street Physicians are expected to begin immediately, he said, and dental services will gradually be phased in.

Staffing for the new dental center is expected to be one dentist, two dental hygienists and possibly a dental assistant.

Plans are to operate the clinic Monday through Friday, with evening hours on Wednesday until 7 p.m.

Residents of Suffolk, Franklin, Isle of Wight, Southampton, parts of Sussex and Surry counties, and even some residents in Gates County, N.C., will be eligible based on income and family size.