

Mid-Lakes Health Center expansion OK'd

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By DIANA KUYPER Special to The News-Sun

ROUND LAKE BEACH -- Lake County Health Department's Mid-Lakes Community Health Center is expanding, with groundbreaking for the 3,000-square-foot addition set for May.

Six years ago, the health center moved into 224 W. Clarendon Drive, the former village administration building, after the new Village Hall was built at 1937 N. Municipal Way.

The Village Board on Monday approved an ordinance allowing the addition to the building and the expansion and renovation of the parking lot.

The Health Department has been using the building to run its medical and dental clinic and the federal WIC (women, infants and children) program. It's one of five community health centers serving the county. The addition will alleviate crowded conditions and allow better service, said Director Jerry Nordstrom.

Prior to moving to Round Lake Beach, the clinic was located in Round Lake Park. It has been in the Round Lake area for many years, according to Leslie Piotrowski, communications manager for the county's health centers. A grant covered initial remodeling of the Clarendon Drive building in 2004.

"There has been a lot of overcrowding. The waiting room is often packed with people. This is absolutely a welcome addition. The staff is very excited, and we will be able to provide services to more people as a result of this expansion," Piotrowski said.

The expansion is being funded by a \$1.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that was awarded in July 2009.

The facility is the Health Department's only health center in western Lake County, where the demand for services is continuously growing. Since this site opened in 2004, annual medical visits have increased by 46 percent, and annual dental visits have increased by 109 percent.

Patient visits in 2008 totaled 23,989 for general family medicine and pediatric services; 7,556 patient visits were made to the dental clinic.

The expansion project will add examination rooms, one dental operatory, and WIC, behavioral health and nutrition counseling space, Piotrowski said.

Although the Round Lake Beach clinic targets the northwest area of Lake County, no patient from anywhere in the county is turned away. Fees are charged on a sliding scale based on income and family size.