

## Spirited Groundbreaking Launches PCHC Expansion

Amid broad smiles and enthusiastic applause, more than 250 guests and Providence Community Health Centers, Inc. (PCHC) staff crowded inside a chilly tent on March 14 at 369 Prairie Avenue to formally break ground and celebrate the start of construction that will turn eight years worth of dreams and persistence into the center's ambitious \$42-million expansion project.

"We wanted to celebrate this morning," said Merrill R. Thomas, PCHC CEO, in welcoming a who's who of Rhode Island government, business, and health care as well as staff and neighborhood leaders.

### Persistence, and Many Good Friends, Explain PCHC Prairie Avenue Success



As I told a packed house at the groundbreaking ceremony for our Prairie Avenue expansion, I was just a kid when my mom told me I was stubborn. "No mom," I replied. "I'm not stubborn, I'm persistent." Today, with construction under way at the former Federated Lithographers site (where, by the way, they once printed Topps baseball cards, among other things), persistence and a long list of indispensable collaborators – our congressional delegation, two mayors, various state and business leaders – explain our success.

My first task on becoming CEO of Providence Community Health Centers in 2001 was to draft a strategic plan, including facility expansion. In 2003, we bought the Federated property. We had visions then of a new building, but did not foresee it taking eight years to pull things together. Maybe Confucius said it best: "It doesn't matter how slowly you go, as long as you do not stop."

We haven't stopped. Nor will we. The many thousands of patients in Greater Providence who depend on PCHC for their health care are counting on us – and our persistence.

Merrill R. Thomas  
CEO  
Providence Community Health Centers, Inc.

"One of the reasons there are so many people here today is that I needed all of you to help pull this off. And so, we thank you all for collaborating with us and working with us."

Manuela Pires, R.N., assistant director of the Allen Berry Health Center a few blocks north of the expansion site on Prairie Avenue, spoke from her heart to tell the gathering why it's important that her current, crowded health center relocate to the new building where they had gathered.

"It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from," she said. "Once you walk through our doors, we will take care of not only you, but your entire family. Our amazing staff not only knows our patients by name, they truly care about them and do their best to make sure they are well taken care of."

Emillian Egbuche, a long-time Allen Berry patient and PCHC board member, said, "The health center has been good to me and my family. Having a community health center in the neighborhood is very important because for many patients it's the only way and the only source of health care available to them."

PCHC served 36,789 patients in 2010, one of every five Providence residents. Forty percent of these patients are uninsured. As health care reform evolves both nationally and in Rhode Island, PCHC's role in Providence and neighboring



CEO Merrill R. Thomas addresses an overflow crowd and numerous dignitaries at the 369 Prairie Avenue "Breaking New Ground" event.



Manuela Pires, assistant director of the current Allen Berry Health Center, extols the many virtues of the PCHC staff and its patient-care capabilities.

communities will expand even more – making this project, on the site of the former Federated Lithographers plant, that much more important.

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## Breaking New Ground at a Glance

- **Where?** 369 Prairie Avenue, a one-block parcel formerly the site of Federated Lithographers.
- **What?** Three new buildings including a new PCHC health center, office building, retail building, and 196 parking spaces.
- **When?** Work began March 14, 2011. Completion expected in late summer, 2012.
- **Who?** Providence Community Health Centers, Inc., founded in 1968, served 36,789 patients in 2010 (one out of five Providence residents), and provided 149,000 patient visits that year. Staff totals more than 300, including doctors, mid-levels, nurses, medical assistants and medical administrative support.
- **What we do:** Provide primary health care in five city locations as well as dental care to pregnant women and children and mental health care. PCHC also runs a school-based clinic at the MET School, an STD clinic and a clinic for the homeless.
- **New Health Center:** Allen Berry Health Center now at 202 Prairie Ave. will move to a new, 41,073 square-foot facility at the new facility.
- **Office Building:** Will cover 50,000 square feet with Lifespan as a primary tenant. Construction to begin this summer and finish in late summer, 2012.
- **Retail Building:** Walgreens has signed a letter of intent to lease and operate a pharmacy in part of this 5,000-square-foot building on a corner of the lot.



An artist's vision provides a look ahead at PCHC's new state-of-the-art community health center facility that will open next year at 369 Prairie Avenue in South Providence.

## Construction Team to Have National and Local Flavor

The addition of BBL Construction Services, LLC (BBL) of Albany, N.Y. as construction manager of the Providence Community Health Centers' (PCHC) \$42-million Prairie Avenue expansion project adds another well-regarded national player to the team that will bring this important South Providence development to life.

BBL joins Central Healthcare initiatives (CHI) of New York City, the project's master developer with a national reputation as an innovator in real estate, financial and operational strategies for health care organizations.

In its duties as construction manager, BBL provides services that apply effective management techniques for controlling schedule, cost and quality. The company has a long history of managing successful health care-related projects as well as other types of developments. The company had adopted a discipline within its management system that was specifically created to promote the successful execution of capital projects of this size and complexity for its owners.

Merrill R. Thomas, PCHC CEO, said that while well-regarded national firms will guide the project through construction, they will use as many local subcontractors as possible. "We intend to have a significant economic impact on the community," Thomas said.



Shovels in hand, PCHC officials, joined by government, community, business and health care leaders, officially break ground for PCHC's ambitious Prairie Avenue expansion.

## What These Opinion Leaders had to Say...

Here is a selection of additional quotes from those who addressed PCHC's groundbreaking ceremony for its 369 Prairie Avenue expansion project.

- **U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse:** "The model of care being developed by the community health centers here in Rhode Island is really extraordinary and it is the key, I think, to addressing the national emergency we have in health care."
- **U.S. District Two Representative James R. Langevin:** "The care you give to the uninsured and the underinsured in Rhode Island is a true model. The work you do is a cornerstone of the whole national health care reform movement."
- **U.S. District One Representative David N. Cicilline:** "The new building will speak to the kind of dignity and care that are provided, but it is the people, the staff of professionals that do it. There is a real emphasis on prevention and wellness."
- **Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts:** "We are going to show the country, but also the people of this community, that what you do now you will do even better in a new facility, with state-of-the-art resources at your disposal. This is the future if we do it right, where people know you and know your family, but at a cost far more affordable to our society."

- **Providence Mayor Angel Taveras:** "I am a former patient of the Allen Berry Health Center. To see what's going on here is a wonderful blessing. I thank you for what you're doing. I look forward to being back here to open this center, to revitalize this neighborhood and to give life and good health to many, many more people."
- **Ned Handy, Rhode Island President of Citizens Bank:** "This is a celebration of an incredibly great project. I'm thrilled that we could be part of its financing, but I'm even more excited to be part of the partnership."
- **Darrell A. Lee, founder and President BCOG Planning Associates:** "Back in the 1990s, we talked about community health centers as an economic engine, not just about health care access but about comprehensive economic development. And that gets done by bringing about multiple investments – from the private sector, from the institutional sector, from the philanthropic sector, and the non-profit and governmental sectors that allow these kinds of projects to work."
- **Michael Pearis, PCHC board member and treasurer:** "This is an important day for the Providence Community Health Centers' future. I'm looking forward to not just a state-of-the-art health center, but also to creating something that will be an economic engine for the city."



An overflow audience joins PCHC leaders and staff on March 14 at the Prairie Avenue site.

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The project will also be the economic linchpin to revitalize this South Providence neighborhood. "Years ago this was a write-off neighborhood," Egbuche declared. "But picture in your head, one year from today, what a classy, beautiful neighborhood this will be."

Rhode Island senior U.S. Senator Jack Reed said that it was important to recognize the economic benefits of the project as well as the obvious health care needs it will meet. "Already," he said, "120 men and women have been working here to prepare the site. So it's not only good for the long-term development of South Providence, but it's already put people to work. And we've got to put more people to work, and we

will, as they continue to build this facility."

"This has taken a lot of different collaboration with a lot of different people," Thomas said. He praised the Rhode Island congressional delegation for its work obtaining federal grants, adding that the federal Environmental Protection Agency had been instrumental in site cleanup. "We now have all the city approvals we need in hand. The city has been great. All of our financing is in place. We got help from Citizens Bank with financing at very good rates," Thomas said.

As you read this, 369 Prairie Avenue will already be abuzz with construction workers turning eight years of dreams into reality by summer, 2012.

### Board of Directors

51% of PCHC board members are also our patients.

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## THE PROVIDENCE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS LOCATIONS

### Administrative Offices

375 Allens Avenue  
401-444-0400

### Allen Berry

202 Prairie Avenue  
401-444-0570

### Capitol Hill

40 Candace Street  
401-444-0550

### Central

239 Cranston Street  
401-444-0580

### Chafee

One Warren Way  
401-444-0530

### Crossroads

160 Broad Street  
401-861-2403

### North Main

530 North Main Street  
401-415-9500

### Olneyville

100 Curtis Street  
401-444-0540

### Dental

557 Broad Street  
401-444-0430

### Whitmarsh Clinic

557 Broad Street  
401-444-0483

### MET Adolescent

325 Public Street  
401-752-2693

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