

Valley Springs health care facility slated to open July 2019

BY CRYSTAL CARSON
CRYSTAL@CALAVERASENTERPRISE.COM

Despite the extremely wet winter in Calaveras County, “great” progress is being made on construction of the Valley Springs Health and Wellness Center.

Construction began in September 2018 for the center, which will be a little over 10,000 square feet at a cost of \$9 million. The construction will continue for approximately 300 days, and completion of the project will mark phase I of plans for future developments in the area.

The center is slated to open in July of 2019.

Dr. Randall Smart, executive director of Mark Twain Health Care District, said that progress has been “terrific,” even with some challenges such as weather and materials. Out of the 300-day contract, construction is 165 days in. “We are on track – and it is just going absolutely great,” Smart said.

“The morale at the job site is really positive. The construction guys are really into this,” Smart said. He went on to say that of the workers from the out-of-county contractor, several of those working on the job actually live in Valley Springs. He is at the site at least once a week, and keeping a close eye on the construction progress.

Smart has been pleased with the amount of interest he’s received from people both inside and outside of the county. The district office receives calls every day from community members who are excited and want to hear more, according to Smart.

The facility will provide general care for the community, as it will be a primary care clinic, a family medical center and will provide internal and pediatric medicine.

An X-ray machine will be on-site, and the facility will be able to provide imaging services for some medical complaints, including injured hands or bronchitis. In addition, the center will boast medical lab capabilities and will be able to provide some blood tests on-site; other tests will need to be shipped out for analysis.

Smart said he is excited to provide the service to the community, which will include state-of-the-art equipment and services, such as an exam table that will weigh a patient and take other vital signs without medical staff touching the patient.

Other modern technology will include electronic medical records (EMRs), managed by Athena Health, which is one of the “best EMRs in the nation,” according to Smart. With the new technology, patients will be able to use a smartphone app to view their medical records, make appointments and leave messages for their doctor, all within the convenience of the application. The technology found in the center will be on par with medical facili-



Courtesy photo

The Valley Springs Health and Wellness Center is slated to open in July.

ties such as Stanford and University of California, Davis.

“The idea is when you walk into the clinic (you) walk out with everything you need. That’s very exciting, and that was the original plan,” Smart said.

Mark Twain Medical Center in San Andreas is run by Dignity Health and is doing its own recruiting for doctors.

There will be at least four medical doctors employed in the new clinic, including one cancer specialist, one dentist and possibly a chiropractor.

“For Calaveras to be moving forward – opening new clinics is just really exciting,” Smart said. “Those projects are really a result of a lot of us in the county making a commitment to make it a better place.”

According to a study by Anne M. Mandich and Jeffrey H. Dorfman from University of Georgia in Athens, Ga., “With the positive benefits on wages and non-health care job growth, hospitals have measurable positive labor market outcomes above their primary objective of providing health care access, particularly in rural counties.”

At the groundbreaking ceremony in September 2018, Smart announced that the center would employ about 30-35 employees.

“That doesn’t sound like much if you’re from Sacramento, but for Valley Springs and Calaveras County, that is a big deal,” Smart said. “The two things people think about when they walk out their front door is their health and their job. Health care is very important.”

The anticipated completion of construction will be in July. Smart expects and is planning for the center to open in August 2019.

A drone video tour of the facility was done by Chad Poortinga. Those interested in viewing the video and progress of construction of the facility can see the video at youtu.be/-dqkUtqYosM.