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## Groundbreaking for south-side clinic nears

Health center will serve uninsured as well as students

By Carmen Duarte

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Frank Hale is closer to seeing "a dream come true."

Hale, a retired professor of family and community medicine from the University of Arizona who retired last year as executive director of El Pueblo Health Center, is among many who have struggled to get a new clinic constructed.

A groundbreaking celebration for a new health center is set for 10 a.m. Tuesday in a vacant lot directly east of El Pueblo Activity Center at 101 W. Irvington Road. The new \$6.2 million state-of-the-art center will be at Nogales Highway and Irvington. It is expected to be completed in October 2010.

"This clinic is a dream come true, and is something that many of us worked long and hard to accomplish," said Hale, naming politicians, health and community leaders. "It completes a vision of providing quality care for those who have no other medical alternative."

The majority of the clinic's patients are women, children and the elderly who are uninsured, Hale said.

In addition to providing family medicine, the health center also runs a free medical testing program to screen for cancers related to TCE (trichloroethylene) contamination.

Lawsuits and federal court settlements led to the creation of the program after it was learned that TCE, an industrial solvent, had been routinely dumped on the ground by airport-area manufacturers for about three decades beginning in the 1950s.

The screening program was established for people not included in a June 1991 \$84.5 million settlement from one of the companies that dumped the chemicals, Hughes Missile Systems (now Raytheon Missile Systems), or other lawsuits.

Dr. Joy Mockbee, who oversees El Pueblo Health Center, said the center also will house a school-based clinic that serves Sunnyside Unified School District students.

"This new health center will allow us to provide comprehensive medical care at one site," said Mockbee. "Patients will see the same team of providers. They will get to know their doctors, clinical social workers or counselors, and community health workers who may go to patients' homes, churches and neighborhood events to offer health education."

The center will offer laboratory, radiology and pharmacy services.

Currently the El Pueblo clinic has four full-time doctors and a total of 25 employees. The new clinic will house 12 doctors and a staff of about 100. Annual patient visits are expected to increase from 13,000 to 40,000, Mockbee said.

### GROUNDBREAKING celebration

- **What:** A groundbreaking celebration for the new El Pueblo Health Center site, which is part of El Rio Community Health Center's network of 16 medical clinics. El Pueblo was a free-standing clinic that opened in 1972, and it merged with El Rio in July 2006.
- **When:** The celebration is 10 a.m. Tuesday.
- **Where:** In the vacant lot east of El Pueblo Activity Center, 101 W. Irvington Road; enter at Nogales Highway and Irvington.
- **Cost:** The cost to build and equip the new clinic is estimated at \$6.2 million, and El Rio has received \$2.5 million in federal stimulus funding for construction and a second federal grant of \$357,000 to furnish the clinic.
- **Donations for the project can be made to El Rio Foundation, the fundraising arm for the clinics, at [elriofoundation.org](http://elriofoundation.org) or send a check to the foundation at 839 W. Congress St., Tucson, AZ 85745. El Rio is seeking private contributions and also will acquire a loan to finance the remainder of the costs.**
- **Information:** 205-4947.

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