

VIM clinic moving into bigger space next month

New facility should reduce wait time for patients, provide more space for volunteers to work

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Patients at the new Volunteers in Medicine clinic, scheduled to open Jan. 5 at 811 W. Second St., will see more exam rooms and shorter wait times.

The 5,250-square-foot facility — a one-story brick exterior building — is 1,250 square feet larger than the current clinic facility at 333 E. Miller Drive. It will have eight exam rooms, two more than the current facility, and a reconfigured flow of patients — enabling the clinic's volunteer health care providers to see more patients each day.

In October, Cook Medical bought the building from retired ophthalmologist Dean Cofield. Cook will lease it to VIM for \$1 a year.

"Words cannot express how grateful we are to Cook," said Elizabeth Sturgeon, the clinic's executive director. "We can't wait to get started in our new facility, where we'll be able to meet the needs of more people, streamline our processes, and do things more efficiently and comprehensively."

Sturgeon said 50 percent of the current facility's space is shared with staff working for Bloomington Hospital's Community Health Services.

"We now have a clinical office that's filled with four staff people, plus oftentimes two to three volunteer staff people," she said. "The new facility will give all of us a lot more room to operate."

In addition to having more exam rooms, VIM's new home will have two intake/discharge rooms — one more than the current building has; a break room for staff and volunteers; and a larger area for mental and behavioral health counseling and health education training.

"We'll also have a conference room," Sturgeon said. "Right now we share a conference room with other services provided by Community Health Services."

The new building will allow Sturgeon, who now shares an office with others, to have her own office.

"We are happy to be involved with VIM in creating this new opportunity for them and their patients," said Jim Murphy, president of CFC Inc., a real estate development affiliate of the local Cook Group. "We wish them all the success in the world."

Murphy said Pritchett Brothers Construction began refitting the new facility Dec. 9.

"We are taking the existing structure and converting it to a similar but different use," he said. "We are relocating and rearranging the office layout and improving the patient flow by taking down a few walls and building a few new walls."

Murphy said some electrical work is being redone, and some of the furniture and built-in tables are being removed and moved to other rooms. The final stages of work will involve painting and laying new carpeting and hard-surface floor coverings.

Sturgeon said she has applied for a grant that, if approved in January, would allow VIM to hire a part-time nurse practitioner to see all the walk-in patients.

"That would really smooth out the process of handling our patient load," she said. "It would shorten patient wait times, especially for walk-ins who normally wait longer than those with appointments."

Sturgeon said she also will be adding another volunteer to answer the phone full time along with the clinic's appointment scheduler.

"We hope that will cut down on the number of people who have to leave a message on the voice mail and wait for someone to call them back," she said.

Busy clinic

Bloomington's Volunteers in Medicine Clinic opened in April 2007 to serve uninsured patients from Monroe and Owen counties. During its first year of operation, VIM had nearly 20,000 patient visits and dispensed more than 30,000 prescriptions. From Oct. 1, 2007, to Sept. 31, 2008, it provided medical services amounting to \$576,378.

Steve Kaho, left, and Rodney Hart, of Pritchett Brothers Construction, remove a cabinet while remodeling a doctor's office at 811 W. Second St., where Volunteers in Medicine will relocate its health clinic next month.
Jeremy Hogan | Herald-Times



**This building at 811 W. Second St. is the new home of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic. The clinic will open at the new location Jan. 5.
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New VIM clinic

