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Capstone breaks ground for new facility

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BY ED HOWELL, DAILY MOUNTAIN EAGLE

PARRISH - U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt and local officials gathered on Wednesday in Parrish for the groundbreaking of the new Capstone Rural Health Center.

The new medical facility, which will be next to the current facility in Parrish, will cover 10,000 square feet, according to Capstone's executive director, Dr. David Jones. That compares to less than 4,000 square feet for the current facility.

Jones said the current clinic has 12,500 visits each year and has 4,000 unique patients registered.

The new \$1.9 million facility is being paid for with \$1 million from U.S. Health and Human Services, plus another \$200,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission, \$100,000 each from the Walker County Community Foundation and the Greater Birmingham Community Foundation, and \$25,000 from Jasper of Honda. The balance of the funding will be paid for through fundraising and a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) loan, Jones said.

Alabama Senate Majority Leader Sen. Greg Reed, R-Jasper, said in a statement, "Capstone does a great job of providing basic healthcare to families in Walker County and across west Alabama. I was happy to assist with securing state grants to help fund the new facility in Parrish, and I will continue to work with local healthcare providers and Gov. Kay Ivey's administration to expand the number of healthcare options in our rural communities."

A number of officials braved cold winds to attending the fundraiser. Besides Aderholt, other who attended included Dr. Dale Cottle, the executive director of the Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center; Beth Thorne-Stukes on behalf of the Walker Area Community Foundation and the Barbara Drummond Thorne Fund; Paul Kennedy, the executive director of the Walker Area Community Foundation; Julie Rogers of the Greater Birmingham Community Foundation; Walker County Commission Chairman Jerry Bishop; Jasper Mayor David O'Mary; Walker Area Chamber of Commerce President Linda Lewis; USDA representatives Phillip Cross and Lisa Likely; Pam Callahan, representing Jasper of Honda; Paul Housel, district field director for Aderholt; Parrish Mayor Heather Hall; Parrish Councilman Jake Williams; architect Russ Realmuto; contractor Darryl Odom; Rev. Alan Beasley; and Capstone Health Board Chairwoman Marcy Brown and board members June Kinley, Ron Polk, Jack Dover, Lamar Alexander, Carol Alexander and Billy Doss.

Hall said, "What an incredible opportunity for the Town of Parrish." She said she moved to the town in 2003 when it was downtown in a small building. Since then the clinic has grown, and she said she was excited how the new facility will help the citizens.

Aderholt said he was a big supporter of community health systems, saying they serve a great need in rural America.

"It is one of the things that Congress makes a good investment in, trying to make sure community health centers across this country are up and running, helping those who many not have insurance or have a limited amount of insurance — or even if you have insurance," he said. "It's a great service for rural America."

Aderholt noted with Congress, with the short-term budget resolution approved during the weekend, extended funding to the Childrens Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which helps low income families and will be helpful to Capstone. "That was the good news that came out of what happened over the weekend," she said.

"This is really a partnership where people come together," he said, comparing to where government sometimes is not working together as it should. "It is really refreshing to have programs like this, where community health systems are really serving the need in rural America and, of course, in rural Alabama."

An open house is expected to be held in the fall, after construction is completed in late summer, Miller later said.

Brown introduced original board chairman Jack Dover and Ron Polk, noting she and the two men were the original board members for the clinic. Dover was the original chairman, and when he stepped down 10 years ago, Brown took over.

"This has been our dream for many years," Brown said. "We've come a long way. We've got a great executive director. We just want you to be a great part of this new facility. We're so excited."

Bishop said he was proud of the work of Capstone and that the county stood ready to help the facility.

The mission of Capstone Health Center is to provide affordable primary, preventive, and wellness services in Walker County, especially for lower-income residents. As a federally-qualified health center, Capstone's services are offered to the public, regardless of its patients' abilities to pay. Indeed, over 80 percent of Capstone's patients make at or below the federal income poverty level.

Capstone's new facility will provide both primary care and mental health treatment, with space for oral health and pharmacy services in the future, too.

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