

Contact: Tom Owens
Aunt Martha's
Phone: (708) 747-7031
towens@auntmarthas.org

19990 Governors Highway
Olympia Fields, IL 60461
www.auntmarthas.org

AUNT MARTHA'S
HEALTH & WELLNESS

PRESS RELEASE

Aunt Martha's Announces Integrated Care Partnership with SwedishAmerican Health System

Collaboration will address "widening" gap between access and availability of primary care, obstetrics care and mental health services

Rockford, IL – January 24, 2017: A new partnership between [SwedishAmerican Health System](#) and [Aunt Martha's Health & Wellness](#) would provide Rockford-area residents with greater access to essential medical services and help reduce escalating health care costs for taxpayers.

The hospital's partnership with Aunt Martha's, one of Illinois' largest community health centers and most experienced providers of [integrated mental health and primary care services](#), would establish an on-site clinic at the hospital, replicating collaborative models already in place at other Illinois hospitals in Woodstock, Joliet, Hazel Crest, Danville and Chicago. Officials expect to open the health center later this spring, pending approval from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA).

The clinic would offer an integrated, holistic, coordinated approach to primary care, women's health services, and mental health. As a patient-centered clinic, it would provide a medical home for many uninsured members of the community who now rely on expensive Emergency Department (ED) visits to meet their health care needs. This drives up costs and shifts the financial burden onto local taxpayers.

In fact, the rate of ED visits involving non-emergency-related cases is 15 percent higher in Winnebago County, compared with the rest of the state, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health. County residents pay more than \$45 million a year, or nearly \$400 per household, stemming from those visits (according to U.S. Census data from 2015).

Aunt Martha's is submitting an application to HRSA to operate as a community-based Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), which provides comprehensive primary care, preventive care, obstetric services and mental health services to patients, regardless of their health insurance status or ability to pay. The Rockford clinic would mark Aunt Martha's 22nd facility located in Illinois.

Noting that Aunt Martha's "has demonstrated its commitment, capability and ability to deliver high quality services" in collaboration with other partners, Winnebago County Health Department Public Health Administrator Sandra Martell wrote a letter supporting the effort, saying the partnership would provide "greatly needed" care to Rockford residents who need it most.

"It's a fact that Winnebago County is battling to meet the health care needs of its residents," said [Dr. Bill Gorski, President & CEO](#) of SwedishAmerican Health System, noting reports by multiple state and local hospitals highlight the community need for a coordinated approach. "Too many of our neighbors, particularly those who are underserved and uninsured, struggle everyday with the challenge of gaining access to adequate medical and mental health services. Our partnership with Aunt Martha's marks a critical step toward ensuring that the needs of our community are met."

[Raul Garza, Aunt Martha's President & CEO](#), believes partnering with an established and trusted local leader like SwedishAmerican Health System to offer full-service medical, preventative, obstetric and mental healthcare treatment aligns with state health care goals and represents the future of successful health care models.

"Innovative health care partnerships like this fill a need by providing a coordinated care approach specifically designed for the community it serves," Garza said. "By identifying the highest-risk patients who cannot manage their own health care needs and finding them routine, preventive care, we can help hold down their health care costs for the entire community."

“We’ve invested a great deal in developing a successful model that integrates a variety of medical services,” Garza added. “That meant developing a new approach that broke down silos between the medical community stakeholders, including ours, so we could coordinate our efforts to serve the community more effectively.”

As part of the effort, Aunt Martha’s announced it is collaborating with [Crusader Community Health](#) to direct patients back to their Crusader primary care provider and Crusader medical and dental home if they visit SwedishAmerican’s ED.

About SwedishAmerican

A division of UW Health, SwedishAmerican is dedicated to providing excellence in health care and compassionate care to the community. The organization serves residents of 12 counties in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin through a dedicated and caring staff, a major acute care hospital and free-standing outpatient cancer center in Rockford, a medical center in Belvidere, a network of 30 primary care and multi-specialty clinics, and the region’s largest home healthcare agency. Additionally, SwedishAmerican has achieved Magnet® recognition as a reflection of its nursing professionalism, teamwork and superiority in patient care.

About Aunt Martha’s

Aunt Martha’s (<https://www.auntmarthas.org/>) is a private, not-for-profit agency providing coordinated health care and social services for family members of all ages in underserved communities across Illinois. The agency serves more than 50,000 children and adults annually. It is state-licensed to provide child welfare, substance abuse treatment and childcare services, and has been continuously accredited by the Joint Commission since 1997.

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