Students reach out to homeless

Collegians will run clinic to extend access to care

BRITTANY HARGRAVE
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Phoenix’s homeless soon will have greater access to free medical care and health education because of a partnership of the three public state universities.

Students and faculty from Arizona State University, University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University have joined forces to open Arizona’s first student-run health clinic for the homeless.

The group, Student Health Outreach for Wellness, will house its clinic in the existing Health Care for the Homeless clinic at Phoenix’s Human Services Campus, near 12th Avenue and Madison Street. The Maricopa County Department of Public Health runs that clinic, which provides weekday primary care.

The student-run clinic initially will operate from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays, said Michelle DiBaise, the program’s administrative director. It will extend services already available at the clinic and add services such as physical therapy.

In addition to increasing access to care for the homeless, the clinic will provide a learning environment for students, DiBaise said.

“It will teach our students about other cultures and how to serve this population, and that is just going to be invaluable,” she said. “We hope to instill in them a lifelong desire to serve the homeless and underserved populations.”

Clinic hours eventually might extend to Saturday evenings, Sundays and weekday evenings, DiBaise said.

Student volunteers plan to present information to waiting patients on diabetes, nutrition and exercise. Law students might provide free legal advice, DiBaise said.

“Through offering disciplines that are not addressed in the current clinic, we’re able to fill a holistic gap,” DiBaise said.

The student clinic will have two provider tracks, DiBaise said. Workers will ask patients whether they would prefer to see a student in a learning environment with faculty oversight or an instructor with a student scribe present.

“We want the students to be able to spend more time with the clients so they can get some teaching moments, but we also want to have faculty see patients so we get to see everybody that needs help,” DiBaise said.

The student clinic’s leaders expect it to open in December.

The Human Services Campus serves about 1,100 homeless people per day, said Katie Vandik, housing and supportive-services manager for Central Arizona Shelter Services.

The Health Care for the Homeless clinic handles about 23,000 visits per year, said Corinne Velasquez, administrator of the Maricopa County Department of Public Health’s clinical-services division. That’s roughly 90 visits per workday.

“This student clinic is definitely meeting a need,” Vandik said. “A lot of the time, our clients will end up in the emergency room on the weekends, and that is a high cost of service. If they have a minor health need, they can now go here instead of going to the emergency room, and that was part of the initial desire for this.”

The interactions students had with the downtown homeless population through a September health fair make it clear they would be a good fit on the clinic campus, Vandik said.

“They bring a lot of positive energy, a desire to learn, and a lot of curiosity to the table, and I think that’s important because our clients are feeling valued and they’re interacting with students who are very eager to assist them,” she said.

The plan for the clinic began with ASU, which was looking to “dive into the general realm of interprofessional care” and identified the need, said Pooja Paode, an ASU junior majoring in biology who co-chairs the student clinic’s communications and public-relations committee.

ASU hired Pamela Thompson to build the student-run clinic because she had previous experience with a similar Canadian clinic. In May 2013, Thompson began putting the program together and reached out to UA and NAU, DiBaise said.

“It sounded really cool that I could have some ownership of this and play a part in making decisions for the clinic,” she said.

The student clinic has more than 100 members, including students and faculty. It has received funds for clinic licensing, overhead and supplies through the universities and donations from foundations, businesses and individuals, Paode said.

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Biosciences building work gets underway

BETTY REID
THE REPUBLIC • AZCENTRAL.COM

Officials broke ground on the $136 million Biosciences Partnership Building in downtown Phoenix earlier this week.

The event signals the start of construction on the 10-story building on the Phoenix Biomedical Campus, near Seventh and Fillmore streets. It is expected to open by fall 2016.

“Research in this building, in collaboration with our partners, will advance health care for all and expand our role as an economic driver for the city, Valley and state,” said Stuart D. Flynn, dean of the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix.

Funding for the building comes from bonds approved by the Legislature in 2008.

The project is expected to create nearly 500 jobs in design and construction and 360 permanent jobs.

UA officials said the project represents another milestone in the city and university’s goal to develop an academic medical center. The facility is an addition to the university’s education building and its ongoing construction of the Arizona Cancer Center.

The 245,000-square-foot research building will house university researchers. Eventually, scientists from outside the university will work with the school, university officials said. The research will include areas in neuroscience, health-care outcomes, cancer and medicine.
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“We have an entire committee that focuses on fundraising and applying for grants,” Paode said. “We’re consistently applying.”

The group also has created a Pitch-Funder crowd-funding campaign through the ASU Foundation. That campaign began Sept. 15 and raised nearly $5,000 as of Oct. 15.

The group also is accepting items such as sterile or reusable medical supplies, backpacks, blankets, coats, jackets and hygiene supplies.

To donate, e-mail funddevelopment@showaz.org.

Universities build momentum in downtown Phoenix

The first state-university expansion into downtown Phoenix can be traced to the mid-1990s, when Arizona State University began leasing space in the Mercado buildings, a failed retail and office complex.

In the 15 years since, downtown has exploded with program expansions, represented by all three public state universities.

ASU has about 12,000 students enrolled in classes downtown.

The University of Arizona College of Medicine-Phoenix is part of the downtown Phoenix Biomedical Campus that includes the UA colleges of public health, pharmacy and nursing, Northern Arizona University programs and the Translational Genomics Research Institute.

Milestones in university expansions downtown

November 1999: ASU purchases the Mercado, near Van Buren and Seventh streets, for $8.8 million.

August 2006: ASU’s downtown Phoenix campus opens and welcomes 3,000 full-time and 6,000 part-time students its initial year.

ASU’s Nursing and Health Innovation building opens near Taylor and Second streets, housing classes and the downtown campus’ Health Services clinic.

ASU opens Residential Commons student housing in the former Ramada Inn-Downtown building at Taylor and Second streets.

The expansion was funded through a 2006 $223 million voter-approved bond package.

August 2007: The UA welcomes 24 students to its new College of Medicine-Phoenix, occupying renovated historical buildings near Van Buren and Seventh streets, which had housed Phoenix Union High School. Phoenix donated the property. The program began as a collaboration with ASU, but that collaboration ended in 2010. The school is part of the Phoenix Biomedical Campus.

October 2007: The Arizona Biomedical Collaborative Building opens near Van Buren and Fifth streets. It houses UA faculty and lab space and ASU’s School of Nutrition and Health Promotion.

August 2008: ASU opens the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication near Central Avenue and Fillmore Street. The $71 million 210,000-square-foot building houses Phoenix’s public television station KAET as well as the journalism programs. The school welcomes 1,500 students its first year.

Taylor Place opens its first 13-story tower, initially housing 420 students, at Taylor and First streets.

April 2009: ASU’s A.E. England building opens and houses Fair Trade Café and a gallery.

August 2009: ASU opens the Nursing and Health Innovation building at Fillmore and Third streets. Taylor Place’s second tower opens to residents. The towers have a combined 1,284-bed capacity.

July 2012: The Phoenix Biomedical Campus expands when UA opens its 268,000-square-foot Health Sciences Education building at Van Buren and Seventh streets. UA begins admitting 80 students to its medical school.

August 2012: NAU opens physical-therapy and physician-assistant programs in the Health Sciences Education building, and adds occupational therapy in August 2014. Also in 2014, UA’s Eller College of Management moves programs from its Scottsdale location to the building.

January 2013: Downtown’s historical post office at Central Avenue and Fillmore Street opens as an ASU student union.

February 2013: Ground breaks on the UA Cancer Center at Dignity Health St. Joseph’s building at Fillmore and Seventh streets. The clinic is expected to be finished in summer 2015. St. Joseph’s will operate outpatient services at the new facility.

August 2013: ASU’s Sun Devil Fitness Complex opens near Van Buren Street and First Avenue. The Lincoln Family YMCA is physically attached to the new student recreation center and operates as a partner with ASU.

June 2014: Construction begins on ASU’s $129 million, six-story Arizona Center for Law and Society building, which will house the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law, a bookstore, café, ASU Alumni Law Group offices and two levels of underground parking. Two think tanks, the Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics and the McCain Institute for International Leadership, also will use the building.

The school is scheduled to open to students in August 2016.

October 2014: UA breaks ground on its Bioscience Partnership building, at Seventh and Fillmore streets. The $136 million project is expected to be completed in fall 2016. The building will be funded through bonds paid for largely with state lottery money.