

Health center proponents honored

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MARION - An attorney, a nurse and the mayor of the city of Marion have been nominated to receive statewide recognition for their support of Center Street Community Health Center.

Nominated through the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers to be honored throughout Ohio as Health Center Heroes are Scott Hoffman, an attorney, Patty Ray, a registered nurse and Mayor Scott Schertzer, a news release states.

As the health center movement celebrates 45 years, the local community health center is marking a year of growth and recognizing the people who have helped.

Nationally, health centers are providing comprehensive, coordinated primary care to 20 million patients in 8,000 medically underserved communities, states the release, which announces Aug. 8 through Aug. 14 as National Health Center Week.

In its nomination of Hoffman, Ray and Schertzer, the center's board of directors states:

Hoffman has provided numerous hours of legal advice and counsel and has been a strong advocate and friend to the center.

"Mr. Hoffman has championed the cause of the medically underserved in the Marion area through assisting with our plans for expansion and recent building acquisition. He has walked with us through the process by attending many meetings and preparing numerous documents that were necessary to complete the process. With a true servant's spirit, he did it all without charge for the benefit of the community and those that we serve."

Schertzer "has been an active supporter of (the center) since our inception, even before we attained 'look-alike' status. Mayor Schertzer joined the director, board and staff members to tour other health centers and to catch the vision of what we could and have developed in Marion. Mayor Schertzer continues to be very accessible to (the center) and responsive to the needs of the medically underserved in Marion."

"The director of (the center) was privileged to meet Patty Ray through an event at Candlewood Lake, and started talking with her about (the center). Patty is an RN and it didn't take long until she was intrigued with the project and said that she would like to come over and check it out sometime. Within a week she had toured our facility and offered to volunteer to help us wherever she was needed. Patty has been an invaluable support to our clinical manager and has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to our staff at a crucial time in our development."

In Ohio, 35 community health centers provided care to more than 500,000 patients last year, recording in excess of 1.75 million patient visits at 160 medically underserved

areas across the state. The health center model is proven to reduce costs while also providing comprehensive care that improves the health of underserved populations, which typically have above average rates of poverty, the release states.

Cliff Edwards, chief executive officer of Center Street Community Health Center, said the center's goal is to meet the primary health and dental needs of the community. Edwards said the center does so by working with its federal partner, the Health Resources Service Administration, and local partners the Marion Community Foundation, Marion County United Way, Marion General Hospital and Marion General Hospital Foundation.

Edwards provided the following statistics to illustrate the Center Street center's response to community needs:

- In 2008 the center provided 3,696 primary care encounters to 974 unduplicated patients.
- In 2009 the center provided 7,264 primary care encounters to 2,306 unduplicated patients.
- In 2010 as of June 30, the center had provided 6,538 primary care encounters, adding an additional 1,103 new patients.
- Since January 2010 the center has provided 4,054 primary care medical encounters to individuals without insurance.