



Dr. Boris Polman, left, and Dr. Joel Traut chat Thursday in a hallway of the Vista Community Clinic's new building. BILL WECHTER | bwechter@nctimes.com

VISTA

# EXPANDED CARE

Building more than doubles size of previous health clinic location

By CIGI ROSS

For the North County Times

Dr. Brian Luschwitz won't have to treat patients out of a converted storage closet anymore, now that the Vista Community Clinic has opened its new location.

The building, dedicated with ceremonies Thursday at 134 Grapevine Road, opened July 20 and is more than twice the size of the clinic's previous home near Tri-City Medical Center on Thunder Drive.

More than 243 individuals and organizations contributed to the project, including DJO Inc., Kaiser Permanente and U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Vista.

"This will be the home for families who struggle every day

to make ends meet and have little or inadequate health care," said Mike Hire, president of the Vista Community Clinic board of directors.

The Grapevine Road clinic cost about \$6 million to build, with \$4.5 million funded by donations from businesses and individuals. The clinic offers pediatrics, family medicine and obstetrics services. It also offers HIV testing and counseling for patients who are HIV positive, health education programs and a pharmacy.

The increase in square footage — from 5,700 square feet to 12,000 square feet at the Grapevine location — allowed the clinic to expand its staff. There are now two full-time pedi-

atricians and three full-time adult medicine doctors, said Chief Financial Officer Michelle Lambert.

The facility is also technologically advanced — doctors are able to electronically prescribe medication to patients and within a year medical records will be kept electronically.

According to Chief Executive Officer Barbara Mannino, five Vista Community Clinic locations in Oceanside and Vista handled 220,000 individual visits and cared for 53,000 patients in 2008, a 9 percent increase in patient visits over 2007.

Clinic officials estimate the Grapevine facility will treat at

See Care, Page B4

## Care

Continued from Page B1

least 16,000 patients and handle at least 50,000 individual visits in its first year of operation.

"The number of North County residents who are uninsured or underinsured is growing, and it's growing rapidly because of the economy," Mannino said. "Many people have lost their jobs, or if they haven't lost their jobs they've lost their health insurance, or they can't afford it. So they rely upon the community clinic as their primary care center."

Fees for doctor visits and pharmaceuticals are determined on a sliding scale depending on income, Lambert said.

"We don't turn sick people

away," she said. "We provide health care. That's why we're here."

The area surrounding the clinic has been deemed a health professional shortage area, which means there aren't enough medical professionals available and willing to serve low-income, uninsured residents. The designation allowed the clinic to receive federal grant money to help fund facility operations.

Mannino said that 98 percent of Vista Community Clinic patients make less than \$34,000 annually for a family of four.

Clinic staff have already noticed an increase in patients since the new building opened about a month ago.

"After the doors opened on July 20, every parking space was filled, the waiting rooms were full and every ex-



The medical director of the Vista Community Clinic's newest location, Dr. Kelly Motadel, accesses patients' health records electronically in a pediatric examination room Thursday as Dr. Joel Traut peeks in the room. BILL WECHTER | bwechter@ncetimes.com

amination room was in use," Hire said.

"It's been pretty amazing, the demand for services," Lambert said.

For more information on Vista Community Clinic, visit [www.VistaCommunityClinic.org](http://www.VistaCommunityClinic.org). To schedule an appointment, call 760-631-5000.

NORTH COUNTY TIMES

# Local

Friday | August 28, 2009

COMMUNITY NEWS | B2  
LOCAL UPDATE | B3  
OBITUARIES | B5



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Page B1