



For Immediate Release
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Sault Tribe and Mackinac Straits Hospital Open Joint Health Care Facility

Open house scheduled April 9

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St. Ignace, Mich. – Working together to bring improved health care and ambulatory care services to Mackinac County residents, the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians and Mackinac Straits Hospital (MSH) will hold an open house 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Friday, April 9 to preview a new 80,000 square foot medical facility in St. Ignace. The facility will service area residents and also includes a portion earmarked specifically for tribal services. The facility is scheduled to open Monday, April 19.

Planning for the new hospital and Tribal Health and Human Service facility began in 2003. In August 2008, Mackinac Straits Hospital secured \$27 million of project funding from the United States Department of Agriculture; facility construction began two months later in October 2008.

The area earmarked for tribal services, 15,000 square feet, is double the amount of space in which current care services are offered and will allow health care to be delivered more efficiently.

“The new Mackinac Straits Hospital and Tribal Health and Human Service facility allows us to have more services in a consolidated area for tribal and non tribal members,” said Sault Tribe Chairman Joe McCoy. “It is a tremendous step toward a healthier community.”

The Sault Tribe’s current facility, the Lambert Health Center, has 8,500 active patient files and 16,500 patient visits each year for the medical, optical, dental, traditional medicine, community and behavioral health areas. In addition, the tribe’s Lambert Center pharmacy fills more than 33,000 prescriptions per year.

The collaboration of health care services between the Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indian’s Health Division and the Mackinac Straits Hospital began in the early 1990s with the Hospital providing much needed acute care radiology and laboratory services for Tribal members who were provided medical services at the Lambert Tribal Health Center.

With the establishment of the Moses Dialysis Unit in 2002, the Sault Tribe extended the partnership of health care service delivery with Mackinac Straits Hospital by assisting to offer dialysis services to area residents.

“The Moses Dialysis Unit was created as a result of Tribal members, as well as the general population, being disproportionately affected by Type II Diabetes and the complications of kidney failure,” said Bonnie Culfa, tribal health director.

The Dialysis Unit is named after the Moses Tribal member family who are from the surrounding area. Today, more than 50 percent of those receiving dialysis services at the Moses Dialysis Unit are tribal members.

The success of these on-going collaborative relationships laid the foundation for the current initiative which is the first of its kind in the nation.

“To our knowledge, this is the first community partnership between a city, county and tribal government to work together in a combined space to provide health care delivery for tribal and community members,” explained Culfa.

The Tribal Health Division services and one ACFS Direct Service Worker – totaling 36 employees - currently located at the Lambert Tribal Health Center will be relocating to the Mackinac Straits Health System’s new hospital facility. The Tribal health care and ACFS services will be located on the second floor of the new facility and will include the current services of Medical-Nursing, Traditional Medicine, Pharmacy, Optical, Dental, Community Health, Behavioral Health and Social Services.

A formal dedication ceremony is being planned by the hospital in July.

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