

North Laurel-Savage Multiservice Center Moves To Larger Building to Accommodate More Clients

The North Laurel-Savage Multiservice Center, which houses numerous human service organizations under one roof, has been busy since it opened in the summer of 2007. And that was before the recession hit. Since the economy took a nosedive, clients have flocked there in record numbers.

To accommodate the influx, the center moved to expanded quarters at Patuxent Square at 9900 Washington Boulevard in North Laurel in July. On Sept. 22, Howard County Executive Ken Ulman, along with representatives from funders and non-profit organizations housed at the center, gathered at the newly leased 3,207-square-foot building to officially open it and cut the ribbon. The new location is almost twice as large as the space at the previous center at Whiskey Bottom Shopping Center on All Saints Road in North Laurel.

The county executive told those who attended the official opening that the expanded center was a “step in the right direction to making sure resources are here on Route 1.”

Community Action Council of Howard County (CAC) President Bitia Dayhoff said, “We have seen the demand for services double in the last year. With the new multiservice center, we will be able to more readily respond to those demands and offer more effective, efficient and improved quality of services.” CAC is a social service agency that oversees the center.

In addition to CAC, nine other organizations offer services at the center. They are Family and Children’s Services; Foreign-born Information and Referral Network; Howard County’s Department of Social Services; Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center; Domestic Violence Center; Legal Aid Bureau; Women, Infant, and Children’s Program; Howard County Workforce Development; and Howard Community College.

The expanded space will allow additional human service organizations to provide services at the center, but they have not been determined yet. The extra area features a waiting room for 25, a conference room that holds 25 people, a kids’ play room, and space to house infants and toddlers who will one day attend Head Start.

A bus stop is located across the street from the center, which should help alleviate the transportation issue that many residents in the southeastern part of the county face.

The annual income of almost two-thirds of the center’s clients is under \$20,000. CAC handles the initial consultations of all income-eligible residents. Each agency has its own guidelines to determine eligibility.

Community events such as distribution of Thanksgiving dinners, vision and hearing screenings, financial and nutritional workshops, and clothing drives are expected to expand. New initiatives such as a food pantry and satellite library, are on CAC’s to-do list.

The center's funders are U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Maryland Department of Housing and Urban Development, Howard County Government (Department of Citizen Services and Department of Housing and Community Development), the Horizon Foundation, and The Columbia Foundation. Horizon Foundation President and CEO Dr. Richard Krieg and The Columbia Foundation President and CEO Beverley Francis spoke briefly at the official opening.

A social services center was located in North Laurel prior to 2007, but did not attract many clients. Changes were made to breathe new life into the center. These include changing the center's name, adding more agencies and making a greater effort to inform residents about the center. The transformation was swift and dramatic. Designed to accommodate 500 calls in 2007, the center has more than tripled expectations. With the expansion of space, more increases are anticipated.

"This beautiful new center is one means of responding to our families," said Ms. Dayhoff. "The program serves as a tremendous model of local government, non-profits, and private foundations working together to provide stability to the underserved."

The center is open Mondays through Thursdays 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Fridays 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The phone number is 410-880-5917. For more information about the center's offerings, visit www.cac-hc.org.