

Algiers Picayune

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

Health clinic moving to a new location

But it needs money to renovate building

By Allen Powell II
West Bank bureau

An Algiers health clinic is hoping to move into new digs within a year, but the group needs to raise millions of dollars to continue offering free quality health care to low-income residents.

The Common Ground Health Clinic at 1400 Teche St. is hoping to relocate to a new location at 501 Newton St. by fall 2010, said Bay Love, the finance director for the clinic. Love an-



JOHN McCUSKER / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Common Ground Health Clinic volunteer Anita Powell dances at the end of a ceremony Sept. 17 marking Common Ground's acquisition of a new building in Algiers.

nounced the move at an anniversary celebration for the clinic Sept. 17, which first began offering health services in the community about 10 days after Hurricane Katrina.

To make the move, the clinic needs to raise \$1 million to reno-

vate its new building, and then the group must find a permanent source to generate the roughly \$2 million annually it would take to operate the clinic.

Common Ground spends about \$1.5 million a year to op-

See **CLINIC**, Page 2

Clinic also needs cash to finance operations

CLINIC, from Page 1

erate its Teche Street clinic, and about 70 percent of that comes from a federal grant set to expire at the end of 2010, Love said. The group is seeking both public and private options to pay for the new clinic, he said, and is considering becoming certified as a "federally qualified clinic" in order to qualify for more financing.

"We know we're going to be here, but we're not sure where that money is going to come from," Love said. "It's astounding the growth and success we've had over the last four years."

The new location would allow the clinic to treat more residents, Love said. The clinic now sees about 125 to 200 patients a day in the converted corner store it leases. Love said many residents are turned away because the clinic just can't handle the workload.

At the clinic's anniversary celebration, community leaders and patients praised the clinic's staff, which includes paid workers and many volunteers, for their close connection to the surrounding community. Several people said it was obvious that the staffers truly care about their patients, and that's why

people wanted to come to the clinic.

Jack "Swamp Rat" Anschutz, a clinic patient, credited doctors there for saving his life after Katrina when they discovered excess carbon dioxide in his lungs. Anschutz said volunteer doctors not only tracked him down and gave him free medication but also called all over the country looking to help him. Anschutz said the clinic is an important part of the community and needs support.

"I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Common Ground," he said.

State Rep. Jeff Arnold, D-Al-

giers, said the clinic will be an important part of the revitalization of Algiers along with the planned federal city project. Arnold said Algiers definitely has the population to support community-based clinics.

With health care such a hot topic in the country, it's obvious that the clinic has the correct formula for success, Arnold said.

"We have an example here of what works," Arnold said. "This is where it's got to start."

Allen Powell II can be reached at apowell@timespicayune.com and 504.826.3793.