

Wellness clinic to open in Shoshone

Facility to provide free care to those in need

A free wellness clinic is slated to open in Shoshone this month, aiming to give services to those who don't have insurance and can't afford medical help otherwise.

John Sexton, 87, started a wellness clinic in Twin Falls with his wife, Sandra, nearly 10 years ago. That clinic, called Mustard Tree Wellness Clinic, is a nonprofit organization that uses volunteer doctors and medical professionals to serve those at or below poverty level who don't have medical insurance. The clinic states on its website that for every dollar donated to the clinic, it gives about \$50 worth of care.

The Shoshone clinic will run in the same manor, according to Sexton, who spoke at a Blaine County commissioners meeting Tuesday. Sexton said the clinic is scheduled to open March 15 and will be open Mondays through Thursdays.

To operate, however, the clinic will need volunteers.

Sexton encouraged the commissioners to spread the word among medical professionals in the area that could volunteer at the clinic, even if it's only one day every other week. He said the clinic is also seeking volunteer greeters and would like to hire a nurse.

Sexton also told the commissioners that he was visiting the area because he would like county commissioners or doctors in nearby counties to join the clinic's board. He said he understands that a long distance separates Shoshone from Blaine County, but he hopes to eventually bridge that gap by opening a satellite office in the Wood River Valley.

"We want to get this one moving [in Shoshone], and then if we get some interest in moving up there, that would be a good place to put it," he said in an interview.

The commissioners said they like the idea and they, too, hope a satellite office would come into the valley because they aren't sure any local doctors could afford to make the trip very often. They acknowledged the positive effects that the clinic could have as a preventive measure to get people help before they need to go to the emergency room, which can harm patients' long-term health and cost more to taxpayers.

"A free clinic is wonderful because there are probably 80,000 people in Idaho who are not insured," Commissioner Jacob Greenberg said.

"You're doing very admirable work," Commissioner Angenie McCleary said.

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So far, Sexton said, the Twin Falls clinic has been tremendously successful, garnering plenty of money to operate through church, county and donor support. Beyond saving taxpayer dollars, though, he said he started it because of his religious conviction of helping those in need.

The Shoshone clinic, scheduled to open March 15, will be operated rent-free out of Dr. Keith Davis' Shoshone Family Medical Center.

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