EXPECTED TO BE COUNTY'S FIRST

Rural Health Center Expected To Open April 19 In Bolivia

Two Shallotte medical practitioners have announced plans to open a health service in Bolivia they expect to be certified as Brunswick County's first rural health center.

Jon Langston, a physician's assistant, and his brother, Dr. Lee Langston, are partners in Bolivia Medical Clinic Inc., scheduled to open April 19 at the corner of U.S. 17 and Knox Street.

Like most medical offices, the center will offer a full range of primary health care services, including well baby and blood pressure screenings to family planning services and treatment of infectious and sexually transmitted diseases. "It will run just like a private doctor's office," said Dr. Langston.

The center will be staffed by Emma Alley, a full-time family nurse practitioner who is relocating from Tennessee, and Jon Langston P.A.C., who will serve half-time as center director. They will work under the supervision of Chicora Medical Group, with Dr. Langston as the center's medical director. La-Bommie Saunders, whose husband George is a physician with Chicora, will staff the office.

While the clinic cannot be certified until after it opens for business, the Langstons anticipate it being designated as a rural health center.

Rural health centers operate like any other medical office. They are intended to serve areas that do not have enough physicians and to ensure that more people have access to medical care. To that end, they utilize "physician extenders" such as family nurse practitioners and physician's assistants and are located in medically underserved areas.

Based on the last review, all of Brunswick County is considered medically underserved. And, according to the 1990 U.S. Census, 15.41 percent of its population was living in poverty at that time.

The Langstons said they hope the center will fill multiple needs-providing medical care to residents of Bolivia and surrounding areas from Town Creek to Boiling Spring Lakes, serving Medicaid and Medicare patients whose health care needs are not being met locally, and helping local caregivers, the medical community.

Medicaid is a federal-state program that helps fund health care for the needy, aged, blind and disabled, and for low-income families with children. Medicare is the federal health care insurance program for

"We really need it bad. We have 6,412 clients on Medicaid. It doesn't do any good because they don't have anywhere to go."

> -Lillie Barnes, Intake Management Supervisor At Brunswick Health Dept.

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Barnes, intake management super-

visor with the department. "And

'We really need it bad. We have

6,412 clients on Medicaid. It

doesn't do any good because they

She agrees with Price that the

She also hopes the center oper-

"If they get it started and people

see how it works, it may prompt

more to open," she said. "It looks

like it would help bring doctors into

Department encounters the same

frustration when Medicaid clients

ask where they can go for services,

The Brunswick County Health

center will not lack for patients. "If

people learn there is a center, they

ates as successfully as anticipated.

don't have anywhere to go.'

will flock to it," Barnes said.

he's the only gynecologist/obstetri-

cian in the county."

the county.'

disabled, with eligibility for it based mainly on eligibility for Social Security.

Price said that under the reimbursement formula available to them, most doctors lose money when they accept Medicaid or Medicare patients. After those patients make up a certain percentage of their practice, it becomes financially difficult to accept more.

Because designated rural health centers are allowed reimbursement for Medicare and Medicaid patients under a different, more favorable formula than is available to physicians, Dr. Langston said the center should break even by recovering all costs directly associated with care provided to those groups of pa-

There is a limit on the fee paid, but it allows you to serve those patients as part of your practice and not lose money," said Dr. Langston. 'We think we can make some money and take good care of people

The Bolivia Medical Center is privately owned and privately financed without any local, state or federal funding, Dr. Langston said. While it expects at least a third of its patients to pay for services received or to have thirty party insurance coverage, Langston anticipates another one-third each will have Medicare or Medicaid coverage.

"We think it's going to work; we're committed to it," said Dr.

"Somebody needs to see those patients," said John Price, a rural health consultant with the N.C. Office of Rural Health. "They'll be inundated with patients. That's what usually happens.

In Brunswick County 12 doctors are Medicaid providers, according to the Brunswick County Department of Social Services, but few if any are accepting new Medicaid patients.

"I don't know anyone outside of people age 65 and older and for the Dr. (Robert) Hassler who is accepttor. "We refer them to the outpatient clinics at New Hanover Regional Medical Center."

Bolivia Mayor Ina Mae Mintz said she's excited at the prospect of the clinic, both in terms of its ser-

"It's a good omen. And it's needed

Dr. Langston has had a medical practice in Shallotte 10 years this July. He received his medical degree in 1972 from the Medical University of Charleston and completed a rotating internship in Savannah, Ga., before entering private practice. He has also had four years of experience in a health maintenance organization in Georgia.

said Jan Reichenbach, health educa-

Langston said he hopes the center's central location will help relieve another problem local health consumers and providers must contend with-a lack of transportation.

vice to the community and what it could signal for the small town's economic future. 'That's a step for here," she said.

here. There are no doctors nearby."

His brother, Jon, graduated from the University of South Carolina's physician's assistant program in 1975. His experience is varied, including stints in a state mental facility, an Indiana prison, a regional hospital's emergency room, three years with a health maintenance organization and three years as director of a health center at Lake Waccamaw prior to joining the Chicora

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Brunswick County Democrats Slate April 17 Convention

Rep. E. David Redwine will be the keynote speaker at the Brunswick County Democratic Party Convention Saturday, to be held April 17, at 1 p.m. at the party's headquarters building near Supply.

Heading the agenda will be election of county officers to serve through the 1994 election cycle. Convention delegates will also elect three members to serve on the party's State Executive Committee. The new chairman serves on this committee automatically, said W.A. 'Bill" Stanley, outgoing chairman.

The convention will also elect 38 local Democrats to serve as delegates to the Seventh Congressional District Convention.

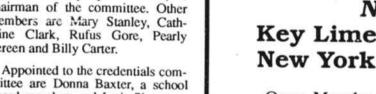
In addition to Redwine, Stanley said other elected officials and candidates are expected to attend.

"We are expecting a good turnout of Democrats from across the county to be in attendance and look forward to a great year ahead for the Brunswick County Democratic Party," he said.

Stanley said resolutions to be presented at the convention must be submitted to the rules and resolutions committee by April 12 at 1 p.m. Vernon Ward, an announced candidate for party chairman, is chairman of the committee. Other members are Mary Stanley, Catherine Clark, Rufus Gore, Pearly Vereen and Billy Carter.

mittee are Donna Baxter, a school board member; and Janis Simmons, Democratic Ladies president: Philip Stout, Democratic Men's president; and Tracy Franks of Oak Island, a member of the state Young Demo-

The Democratic Headquarters building is located on U.S. 17 Busi-



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