

# Hospitals vying for spots in booming north Oakland County communities

Nearby hospital groups are vying for a spot in Clarkston in hopes of capitalizing on its booming population.

The evidence is an influx of hospital-affiliated clinics and expanded medical services.

"Everybody's moving in," said Anthony Aenlle, M.D., a local internist who recently bought the Clarkston Clinic and, in addition to expanding its medical services, moved it to the intersection of Dixie Highway and M-16, an area that is quickly becoming a health care hub.

Aenlle's facility is a stone's throw from the Mid-Oakland Medical Center where the north Oakland physician James O'Neill, M.D., will open an urgent care and 24-hour emergency center.

At the same Independence Township intersection, Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital is poised to open a comprehensive medical campus with an emergency room, assisted-living facility and ambulatory care center.

Hospital groups have been setting up satellite clinics and centers throughout metropolitan Detroit over the past decade in an effort to tap into communities removed from their primary facilities, but the trend has only recently hit the Clarkston area.

"There is a certain excitement about this market. But if you look at the health care system, there is keen competition so hospitals are vying for position," said POH's medical director

Mark Kiffer, D.O., of POH's long-term thinking for the community and the general growth of medical services there.

Even Aenlle, who used to see patients by appointment only, has begun accepting walk-ins. He's also increased his hours of operation from four to seven days a week.

"I'm trying to increase the clinic's capabilities as far as services. Now that the population is starting to grow, I'm trying to create new avenues of care locally," Aenlle said.

Another addition to Aenlle's practice is a bone densitometry machine for osteoporosis screening. The machine will allow local residents to undergo testing in the community, rather than having to travel to south Oakland County. And Aenlle will allow certified doctors in the community to use the machine for a fee.

But Aenlle's densitometry services won't be the only specialty services in town. Nor will he and O'Neill be the only doctors from which residents can choose a primary-care physician.

Pontiac-based North Oakland Medical Centers expects to offer residents a variety of local services within a few months, said JoAnn DiGiovanni, administrator for physician practices, North Oakland Medical Centers.

In addition to primary care and OB/GYN services, the group will offer full radiology services, CAT scans, minor surgery and surgical consultations.

Like Aenlle, their expansion is being combined with a relocation — from a Deer Lake Road clinic to the Mid-Oakland Medical Center. The hospital group's pediatrics clinic on Sashabaw Road will remain in its current location.

"We're anxious to get in," said DiGiovanni. "It's a growing community, and we consider it to be our future area."

Likewise, William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak and Genesys Health System, based in Flint, are trying to establish a local presence.

Beaumont has plans to open two primary care practices at Citation Drive and M-16 and expects to open one by late summer, said Cecile Stimmell, Beaumont public affairs assistant.

Genesys has construction of a 9,000-square-foot medical facility on Walden Road near Sashabaw under way and expects to open by mid-summer, said Genesys spokesman Mark Harris. The center will house six primary care physicians from

Genesys including local family practitioner Shawn K. Conner, M.D., and rotate specialty physicians like cardiologists and neurologists based on demand.

Also hoping to get an edge on the specialists market, POH last month opened a family practice clinic on South Main, where primary care and specialty physicians will be on site.

By rotating medical specialists at the clinics, residents won't have to travel outside the community for such services, giving POH and Genesys a competitive edge over other hospitals.

"It is a way of being competitive and getting the market share for health care systems," Kiffer, of POH, said. "We're all aware of the increase in population growth in north Oakland County and what appears to be a family migration from the south to north."

"As these families move, they're going to need medical services, and so health care providers are going to position themselves accordingly," he said.

## Map-reading contest tests students' skills

Nearly 100 students from 16 schools across the state will participate in AAA Michigan's "How to Read a Map" State Championship Road Rally.

Oakland County schools represented at the event will include East Hills Middle School in Bloomfield Hills, Rutherford Middle School in Rochester Hills and Warner Middle School in Farmington. The indoor road rally will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Thursday, April 23, at the Hill Center for Academics and Technology, Lansing.

"Thanks to educational efforts like this one, geography is making a comeback in our classrooms," AAA Michigan Community Relations Manager Susan Carbin said. "We hope this event will continue to enlighten people regarding the need for a strong geography curriculum

in the schools and at home."

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 22 percent of fourth graders, 28 percent of eighth graders and 27 percent of twelfth graders reached the proficient achievement level. In March 1994, AAA Michigan launched its "How to Read a Map" program.

The 1998 State Championship Road Rally is an extension of this program, testing basic geography skills students need when studying or traveling.

The top three winning teams will receive cash prizes (ranging from \$100 to \$500 for classroom use), and school and individual plaques. All team members will receive "How to Read a Map" long-sleeve T-shirts and certificates, as well as a AAA Connect phone card good for 33 free minutes.

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