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By Adam Benson
 abenson@norwichbulletin.com
 (860) 908-7004

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Malloy checks out expanded UCFS site in Norwich

NORWICH — United Community and Family Services on Monday had the chance to show off its new \$5 million expansion to Gov. Dannel P. Malloy as he made a campaign swing through the region.

And before he left, Malloy offered a promise that he'd directly support the Norwich-based nonprofit's efforts to shed its "look-alike" status as a federally qualified health center.

"I'm a big believer in this particular model of provision of health care services, particularly to an under-served community, and this area of the state is under-served," Malloy said outside the 47-55 Town Street clinic, which just completed a \$5.5 million expansion to add 48,000 square feet, doubling capacity and adding space for 24 new exam rooms. It was built mostly using a \$3.4 million State Bond Commission allocation awarded in 2011.

There are 13 federally qualified health care centers across the state, but UCFS is the only designated "look-alike," which means the services it offers clients are the same, but without federal dollars to help defray health care costs.

UCFS President and CEO Chuck Seeman said last week that in 2013, the 13 designated centers got \$32 million in operating costs and had their malpractice insurance covered. And during the two years before that, they got a total of \$30 million in capital for facilities upgrades.

Sheila Hayes, a Norwich resident and member of the UCFS board of directors, said the organization has enjoyed great success with private donors and philanthropic groups.

"We're not just relying on state dollars. We know what we have to deliver to make a project go forward," she told Malloy.

Jennifer Granger, UCFS' chief operating officer, said the organization is applying for a New Access Point grant through the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, a branch of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The deadline to file is Oct. 7, and Malloy said he'd put his name behind UCFS' application.

"I will absolutely be supportive and am happy to send a letter and call the secretary," Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Malloy said.

He added the state's financial backing of the project was worthy.

"This is a solid investment. This is a very cost-effective way to make sure people are getting appropriate and timely treatment of issues. On the mental health side, probably nobody has a better track record on that than this agency," he said.



Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy talks with Women's Health Coordinator Kathy Lopez, Chief Medical Officer Ramindra Wallia, COO Jennifer Granger and midwife Carter Fish during a tour of the updated UCFS facility in Norwich Monday afternoon. Aaron Flaum/NorwichBulletin.com

What's next

What: First gubernatorial debate between Democratic Gov. Dannel P. Malloy and Republican candidate Tom FoleyWhen: 7 p.m. Aug. 27Where: Slater Auditorium at Norwich Free AcademyTickets are free and the event is open to the public. They can be obtained starting Wednesday at The Bulletin's 10 Railroad Place building during business hours and will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no assigned seating, and doors open at 6 p.m. Bulletin Editorial Page Editor Ray Hackett will moderate the debate.

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