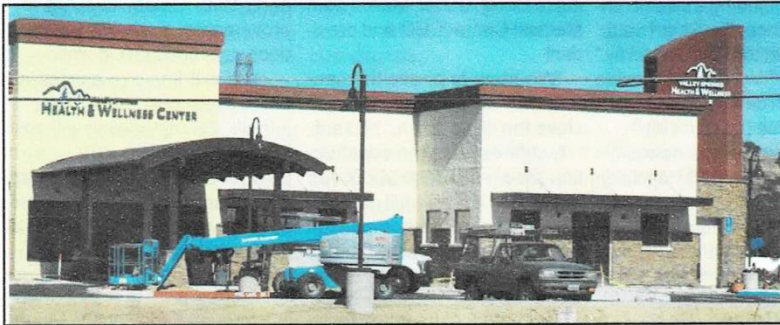


# THE Valley Springs NEWS

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## Tale of 2 clinics Wellness Center close to opening; remodeling for existing facility

By Nick Baptista

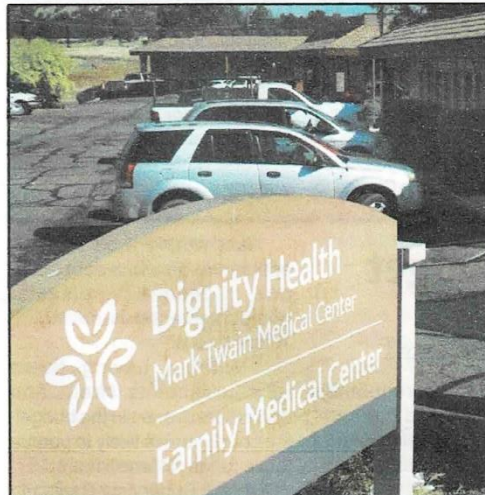
The Valley Springs Health & Wellness Center is scheduled to open Oct. 15, slightly more than a year after its groundbreaking ceremony.

The new Health & Wellness Center will have a half-dozen doctors or health care providers, said Dr. Randy Smart, executive director of the Mark Twain Health Care District, which is operating the clinic.

In all, 20 people have been hired so far including nurses, medical assistants and other staff members.

"There has been a lot of (employment) interest," Dr. Smart said. "We were looking for people who share our passion and are excited and actually care about helping other people. We had the great fortune

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**Valley Springs will have two clinics with the mid-October completion of the Health & Wellness Center, above, and the existing Family Medical Center, left.**

## Clinics

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to pick and chose and we got some really great people."

Three weeks of staff training began on Monday and after the initial start up there will be a grand opening ceremony on Friday, Oct. 19.

The program starts at 10 a.m. with the ribbon-cutting at 11 and an open house to follow with staff available to answer the public's questions. Refreshments will be served in the lobby along with music provided by a DJ. Materials about the clinic will be available as well as free gifts such as water bottles with the center's logo.

Dr. Smart sees the grand opening running until about 1 p.m.

He sees the center adding dental services by the beginning of December.

The center will also become the Valley Springs area's designated Rural Health Clinic and while its target patient population will be those on Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal, it will also be open to everyone including those on private insurance, Dr. Smart said.

"We will not turn anyone away," he added. "We plan to provide good health care to the community and raise the bar a bit."

Construction of the new clinic is coming in near its \$7.5 million budget.

"We're pretty much near the end of the contract and we may

be 1 percent over budget," Dr. Smart said.

Mark Twain Medical Center will continue to operate the Valley Springs Family Medical Clinic at 1919 Vista Del Lago Drive.

That clinic will go through a re-licensing process since it no longer is a Rural Health Clinic, with construction slated to begin near the end of the year, according to Doug Archer, Mark Twain Medical Center CEO and president.

"We hope to phase the construction so we won't have to close the clinic down," he said.

Archer expects the construction process to take about two months.

"It may seem like competition (between the two Valley Springs

clinics), but we're focusing on the partnership aspect of it," Archer said.

While the existing clinic no longer will be a Rural Health Clinic and see Medi-Cal patients, it will focus on primary and specialty care for Medicare and commercially insured patients, Archer said.

The work associated with the re-licensing will center on Americans With Disabilities Act improvements, such as widening doorways and moving walls.

"We will improve access as much as we can," he added.

In all, the remodeling will cost between \$300,000 and \$600,000, with the higher figure dependent upon a plumbing construction question that was yet to be resolved.