

FORT BENNING: New clinic opens on Old Cusseta Road

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2011

LEDGER ENQUIRER

<http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/2011/04/27/1554751/fort-benning-new-clinic-opens.html>

A Fort Benning soldier might not be alive today if the Harmony Church Consolidated Troop Medical and Dental Clinic hadn't been available for emergency care.

"He is alive," said Bruce Cox, a physician's assistant who was on duty that morning four weeks ago. "Otherwise, he probably wouldn't have made it."

Providing health and dental services eight miles from main post was highlighted Tuesday as the new medical and dental clinic officially opened at 6998 Old Cusseta Road. The \$15.2 million facility will be fully staffed by midsummer as it welcomes 7,500 soldiers to Harmony Church. It's part of Base Realignment and Closure process to move the U.S. Armor School from Fort Knox, Ky., to Fort Benning. The expansion is projected to bring 28,000 people to the Chattahoochee Valley, including soldiers, civilian workers, contractors and family members.

With some of the most advanced equipment available, the 32,400 square-foot facility treats about 150 soldiers daily with a staff of 50, but medical personnel could increase to 80 by midsummer as more soldiers arrive. The move is expected to be completed by Sept. 15.

Col. Tom Macdonald, the post garrison commander, said the soldier experienced chest pains after doing physical training. The staff quickly identified his symptoms as those of an active heart attack.

He was stabilized and transported to St. Francis Hospital, where he received two stents later that day.

"That soldier is here today because of the quick access to care," Macdonald told a crowd of about 100 medical and military personnel gathered for the official clinic opening.

The clinic is equipped with similar services that would be offered at Martin Army Community Hospital. They include sick call, routine physicals, routine care, immunizations, evaluations, optometry, general radiology and minor surgical procedures.

A third of the clinic is used for dental care and treatment, focusing on exams, extractions, dental hygiene and root canals beginning next month. "They don't have to go to main post," Macdonald said.

Another feature of the clinic is having a pharmacy on site.

Macdonald noted how much Harmony Church has changed in the last three years.

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“When I took over as garrison commander almost three years ago, this side of the highway was all dirt, with trees and one building was being framed. It was the barracks,” he said.

Pointing across the four-lane on U.S. 27 where M1 Abrams tanks now are parked near new buildings, Macdonald said that was all forest. “It really has come a long way,” he said. “It’s great to see all this construction getting complete.”

In addition to serving the Armor School, the clinic will serve the 4th Ranger Training Brigade, members of the U.S. Marine Corps who get armor training at Fort Benning and the National Guard.

To understand what the clinic may face in the coming months, Cox said medical staff has contacted Fort Knox officials about the medical needs of soldiers moving to Fort Benning. Some have diabetes, hypertension and other complications requiring frequent care.

“We have already picked up on a lot of these things,” Cox said.

The staff is doing some projections on the number of people the clinic may serve but won’t know until everything is up and going.

“We feel like we are ready to meet the needs,” Cox said.

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