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# Valley Med offers one-stop shopping to patients

By **CATHERINE BAUM**  
Staff Writer

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Monday, February 8, 2010

EASTHAMPTON - When people think of a one-stop shopping experience, X-rays, physical therapy, behavioral counseling, annual check-ups and prescription refills might not come to mind.

But at the Valley Medical Group, all of these services are provided under one roof.

"Our concept is one-stop shopping," said Joel Feinman, president of the group's health centers in Amherst, Easthampton, Northampton and Greenfield. Valley Medical Group has used the "one-stop shopping" model for 30 years, Feinman said, in part because it's convenient for patients and employees.

"If you're sick, you can get most of the things you want in that day, right in that spot," Feinman said.

For approximately \$7 million, Valley Medical Group expanded the Easthampton facility when it moved less than a mile up Northampton Street four months ago. Planning stages for the project began in early 2008.

"We were well on our way when the economy began to tank," Feinman said. "Yeah, we had some reservations about the project, but what we knew was the community was underserved medically so that gave us some comfort in terms of feeling secure in the business."

The new, energy-efficient building, which is 33,000 square feet in size, allows the medical group to more than double its patient load with increased staffing. There are now about 350 employees across the four sites. "Our practice is growing," Feinman said.

80 new patients per month

In Easthampton, Valley Medical Group has gained an average of 80 new patients a month. On Tuesday morning last week, six people sat on the gray-cushioned chairs in the waiting room, reading their newspapers and magazines. There's plenty of space: About 30 chairs were empty.

Historic images of old Town Hall, Button Shop, the Glendale and Nashawannuck mills, Fort Hill Street Bridge and the gymnasium at Williston Seminary hung from the yellow walls.

"The patients love them, especially the older ones who remember a lot of these scenes," said Diana Cole, facilities coordinator.

While the images unique to Easthampton are appropriate for a museum or the city's Historical Society

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GORDON DANIELS

Joel Feinman, president and associate medical director for performance improvement, Valley Medical Group, said of his business, "If you're sick, you can get most of the things you want in that day, right in that spot."



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office, the black, bold, capital letters around the chairs labeled "reception," "laboratory" and "optometry" make it clear that people are here for their health. Pamphlets and posters with information about HIV, safe sex and H1N1 were positioned next to plants adorning wooden coffee tables. Phones rang, copiers beeped and cash registers cha-chinged inside the Louis & Clark pharmacy, conveniently located next to the exit.

Inside the full-service pharmacy, green and purple butterflies decorate the walls with the word "live" surrounded by "happy," "beautiful," "active" and "well." The pharmacy, which opened last month, sells crutches, bedpans, walkers, modified toilet seats and wheelchairs, among other post-surgery equipment.

"Especially in this year, there's very few medical equipment providers," said Rich Hoeckh, pharmacy director. "For us, it's the partnership with Valley Medical that's going to make us succeed, and it's the one patients will benefit from most."

Meanwhile, a 2-year-old girl opened and closed the tiny cabinet door in a closed-off play area, which included a children's table, play foods and measuring cups. The girl's mother, Karissa Lucchesi, of Florence, said her daughter enjoys hiding in the cabinet. "She loves going to the doctors," Lucchesi said.

Lucchesi accompanied her fiance on his visit to the doctor that day. She said her mother, father and children are also patients at this medical center. They followed their doctors to the new site when it moved.

"The pharmacy's great; the people here are great," Lucchesi said. "I know almost everybody here by name. I love the doctors here."

The optometry department isn't open yet, but Feinman said the center plans to add that service as well as digital mammography sometime this year.

Upstairs, 25 exam rooms share a corridor. The nursing station is located across from practitioner offices. A treadmill, elliptical, exercise balls, step bench and scale are inside the physical therapy room.

Doctors, clinicians and radiologists said the "one-stop shopping" model here improves the quality of care patients receive.

"It's easier for us to talk to each other within this building to coordinate their care," family Dr. Yfla Perry said during an interview in her Easthampton office last week. "I just walk over instead of having to call the hospital and see if there's an opening. It's so much easier to get people in."

The Easthampton site was expanded to respond to a growing need for primary care in the area, according to Feinman. Valley Medical Group's oldest site is in Florence, which has the smallest building and the largest number of patients.

"This is the first building designed from scratch," Feinman said.

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