

La Red Health Center is well positioned to help meet the healthcare needs of Sussex County -- April 22, 2005

by Delaware Congressman Mike Castle

La Red Health Center located in Georgetown, Delaware is one of the most effective and important health centers in our state. It provides bilingual, culturally appropriate high-quality and cost-effective primary and preventive medical care to over 5,000 residents of Sussex County who are uninsured, underinsured or who face other barriers to medical care. This is critical considering that according to United States Census data, Sussex County represents the fastest growing Latino and African American population in Delaware. Currently, Latinos represent ten percent of the County's population, an increase of nearly 300 percent. With this growth, there is a limited amount of resources available to meet the unique needs of this population. That is why the news that La Red Health center has become a federally qualified health center couldn't have come at a better time

Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) approved La Red as a federally qualified health center (FQHC). To get to this point has been a challenge. La Red has had to face hurdles along the way, including a constant struggle to raise funding, a consistent effort to best reach out to the underserved members of the community, and achieving federal "look alike" status on their way to this important point. And the Delaware Congressional Delegation has been backing them up all the way -- signing support letters, working with national associations to review their application, and signing their praises in Washington, D.C.

Nobody deserves this recognition more than La Red Health Center -- years of hard work and dedication by all the members of the staff, improvement and expansion of services, and outreach into the community have paid off. Now that La Red is officially federally qualified, they will be able to take advantage of such benefits as prescription drug discounts and technical assistance, all of which will allow La Red to better provide health care services to our Sussex County community

Following in the footsteps of the three great federally-qualified community health centers in Delaware, Westside Health, Henrietta Johnson and Delmarva Rural Ministries, La Red will now continue on with their mission of service with the support of federal funding and with the safety net that they will be able to continue to apply for such funds. The health center will receive \$650,000 in federal funding each year for the next three years through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the HHS. This funding will be awarded on or about December 1, 2005 as Fiscal Year 2006 funds become available. La Red has also been awarded an additional \$200,000 each year for the next three years, through the Rural Health Outreach Program to support La Red's Prenatal Program. This grant is designed to encourage the development of new and innovative health care delivery systems in rural communities that lack essential health care services. La Red will seek to fill that void by providing quality prenatal health care.

With this designation, La Red will also be able to take advantage of federal funding and other privileges including: enrolling in the 340 B Federal Discount Drug program, which allows the center to get prescription drugs at a discount rate; applying for federal tort claims, which provides insurance to the center; and receiving federally funded technical assistance. This is part of a Congressional effort to double the funding for the expansion and creation of new community health centers over a five-year period.

This is an exciting time for La Red, but even more so for the growing number of patients in Sussex County -- they have a quality health center they can turn to in times of need and know that this center will be able to increase their services over the years.

For more information, please call La Red at (302) 854-9262 or www.laesperanza.org/con_lared.htm.