

New Mexico Cancer Resource Center holds ribbon cutting

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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Founder Barbara McAneny calls it an ‘act of love’

The New Mexico Cancer Center held a ribbon-cutting ceremony and reception for the opening of the Community Cancer Resource Center near UNM-Gallup.

The event, held April 15, drew visitors and invited guest speakers from the community.

One of the founders, Dr. Barbara McAneny, spoke to the crowd about how people had to travel

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to Albuquerque for treatment prior to the opening of the center. NMCC has been present in Gallup since 2007. McAneny talked about how cancer impacts more than a patient's health.

"I can't think of anything worse than getting chemotherapy while living in your car," she said. "This is an act of love."

"I was told by a patient, 'This is a medical problem, [NMCC] gets this is a family problem, but do you know this is a financial disaster?'" she said.

McAneny said that two-thirds of bankruptcies are caused by medical emergencies, which is what led her and her peers to realize they have to create a way to help patients financially.

This thought led to the creation of NMCC, which then led to them taking donations to help pay the bills for patients struggling to get treatment, she said.

Some of the acts that the center has performed for Gallup patients include paying for rent, food, and in one case, a repossessed truck, McAneny said. To date, they have helped over 1,600 patients and paid over \$1 million in bills, she added.

"That's what this foundation does for people," she said. "No one can fight cancer alone."

NMCC is an independent, multi-disciplinary, multi-site practice operated by New Mexico Oncology Hematology Consultants Ltd. founded by Dr. Clark Haskins and Dr. Barbara McAneny in 1987. Their website says they aim to provide high quality, compassionate, comprehensive, and patient-centered cancer care across New Mexico.

Bill Lee, CEO of Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce, said that the community would not be the same without NMCC.

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“My wife is a breast cancer survivor, moving here gave her a clean bill of health,” he said. “So I have learned through experience how important this facility is.”

Lyle Harvey, a medicine man who blessed the NMCC Gallup building in 2007, was also present to speak about the new center.

“It’s a very powerful thing, cancer. It’s a battle, it takes a team to fight it,” he said. “Cancer financially, spiritually, emotionally, physically, psychologically costs [the patients].”

Harvey performed a song for the crowd, one he said was about healing and renewal.

Mayor Jackie McKinney gave two accounts of how NMCC was important to him: when his wife first came to the center about 12 years ago, and when he lost his father about five years ago to the disease, which he has dubbed “the evil C.”

“What you’ve created is hope, what you’re doing for our unique population here that needs your help,” he said, adding the center is excellent and much-needed. “If we all work together, we’ll all heal.”

The financial burden was emphasized by the final speaker at the event, Keith Powell, from the NMCC Board of Directors.

Powell said that nothing is more traumatic than the financial burden of a cancer diagnosis. “We take that away,” he said.

Powell said they adhere to a saying, “No money, no mission,” which he said means that they have to have the funds to carry out their goals. He emphasized how important it is for patients to be willing to ask for assistance.

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“If your life depended on it, you’d do it. Someone’s life does,” he said.

The ribbon cutting was performed by McAneny, with the rest of the board and the NMCC staff behind her. With the new center, Powell said their new task is to continue to take the efforts of the Gallup center to new heights.

“We can, we are, and we will continue to make a difference in patients’ lives, one at a time,” Powell said.

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