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# Racine Mayor Mason: City and partners announce collaborative effort to launch a federally qualified health clinic at Julian Thomas Elementary

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City and RUSD partner on location to promote wrap around services for Community School Model

**Racine –** Today, City of Racine Mayor Cory Mason was joined by Racine County Executive Jonathan Delagrave, Racine Unified School District (RUSD) Superintendent Dr. Eric Gallien, Gateway Technical College President Dr. Bryan Albrecht, United Way Vice President of Community Impact Karin Kirchmeier, and Alison Sergio from the Health Care Network to officially announce that the city has submitted an application to the federal government to create a Federally Qualified Health Clinic (FQHC) in the City of Racine.

Over the past year, the City of Racine Health Department and the Racine County Human Services Department have organized a diverse coalition of government, health care, business, faith-based, community-based and philanthropic stakeholders to evaluate the need for a FQHC. After several organizational meetings, community listening sessions and a community needs assessment, it was determined that the need for a stand-alone FQHC in the City of Racine is imperative and urgent.

“I’m proud of the work we have done over the past year to find solutions to address the disparities in healthcare that exist in our community,” said Mayor Cory Mason. “We know low income and underserved populations in the city and county have faced major institutional challenges in accessing health care. Racine is currently the largest city in Wisconsin without an FQHC. Locating a permanent FQHC in the City, will be a catalyst to create more access to affordable high-quality health care, close health care disparity gaps, and offer healthier lifestyle options for our residents.”

The most significant outcome of the planning process is the strategic development of locating the FQHC, officially named the Racine Community Health Center (RCHC), at Julian Thomas Community School, which is made possible through a collaboration between the United Way of Racine County and RUSD. They have committed to allocate Community Program and Services Fund (Fund 80) revenues to remodel a 5,000-square-foot space in the school building. This commitment affords the City the opportunity to provide services at a community school location, ensuring that students, families and residents receive increased access to health care services while making the school the center of the neighborhood.

“As we partner with United Way of Racine County to open our second community school at Julian Thomas Elementary in the fall, I am thrilled to also announce this partnership with the city to create an FQHC,” said Superintendent Dr. Eric Gallien. “This is another example of how working together we are able to provide services that support healthy families.”

“United Way of Racine County fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in our community. Our work in health focuses heavily on creating a community where everyone achieves and maintains good health that improves their quality of life. Partnerships such as this demonstrates the importance of collaboration to improve access to healthcare and support healthy lifestyles for youth and adults. As it is clear that healthy lifestyles make a significant impact on a community, leading to better achievement at school and work, with reduced absenteeism and increased productivity on the job,” said Karin Kirchmeier, United Way Vice President of Community Impact.

The creation of the RCHC demonstrates a major commitment from the highest level of civic, community, and business leaders toward finding more efficient and cost-effective ways to deliver health care and reduce emergency room visits for our residents. The model of service delivery as a freestanding location will offer primary care, case management, health education, behavioral health, and dental care in the

most underserved neighborhoods.

“We have seen a number of tremendous accomplishments over the past year in Racine County — because we have collaborated and worked together like never before. I’m proud that Racine County could play a role in convening community leaders to solve this challenge and take a major step forward in bringing a Federally Qualified Health Clinic to Racine,” said County Executive Jonathan Delagrave.

The commitment of the major regional hospital system to work with Racine Community Health Center is critical. Ascension, Aurora, Froedert, and Children’s Hospital will provide a mix of resources and technical expertise that will help RCHC better serve the community. Acting as a direct referral service, the hospital systems will be aligned to direct patients, to the RCHC for sustained primary care, which will lead to better health outcomes for the community.

“The Racine community will continue to get things done through partnerships. I can’t thank our partners enough for engaging in this process and dedicating resources towards it. Together, we are building a healthier, more equitable community,” said Mayor Mason.

The federal government will make FQHC designations towards the end of summer. Should the City be awarded the designation, it will have 120 days to open the clinic doors and begin serving clients. Construction of the clinic on the garden level of Julian Thomas Elementary School is scheduled to begin in June and be completed before the end of summer. The intent of the City is to open a copy-cat or look-a-like clinic at the site if for some reason the City is not awarded the FQHC designation this year. Establishing the copy-cat clinic, would improve the chances of the City receiving the FQHC designation if it need to apply again the following year.