

The Elkhart Truth

Grant allows Maple City to expand maternal, children's health services

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ELKHART — The Community Foundation of Elkhart County has granted Maple City Health Care Center an award of \$150,000 in the Spring 2023 award cycle to expand its high quality maternal and child health services.

The award will help Maple City Health Care Center serve more women and young children who have traditionally had a difficult time accessing high quality health services because of income, insurance status, language, low trust of health systems or other barriers to care.

Elkhart County has had persistently high maternal and infant mortality for years, especially among underprivileged groups and those with low access to quality health care, according to organizers. High quality prenatal and pediatric care are linked to improved birthweight, lower infant and child mortality, higher rates of breastfeeding, and more children reaching developmental milestones and being ready for kindergarten when the time comes.

According to the Indiana Primary Health Care Association, Maple City Health Care Center has the highest quality scores of any Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)

in Indiana, including in women's and children's care, while also having the highest uninsured patient rate, highest percent of patients identifying as Hispanic, and highest percent non-English speaking patient mix.

"If we are going to meet our community's needs in this critical area of maternal and child health, we need to expand our capacity and welcome new patients to Maple City," said Paul Shetler Fast, executive director of Maple City Health Care Center.

The Community Foundation's support will allow Maple City Health Care Center to increase clinical staffing to be able to serve more mothers and children. They plan to hire an additional Family Medicine Physician with Obstetrics specialty, a Nurse Practitioner with Pediatric specialty, and a Certified Nurse Midwife as well as restart and expand bilingual pregnancy and early childhood development groups.

"We believe that Maple City Health Care Center is another excellent example of our mission to improve the quality of life in Elkhart County by inspiring generosity," said Pete McCown, president of the Community Foundation. "We are pleased with what they've presented to us, and we expect them to be successful in their efforts. Maple City Health Care Center is another vital link in the chain of non-profit entities that are improving our quality of life in Elkhart County."

"So much of what we do in pregnancy care at Maple City Health Care is unique," said Anna Grady, OB physician lead at Maple City Health Care Center. "Our midwifery program has the only hospital-privileged midwives at Goshen Hospital. Our Centering Pregnancy program is the only one in Elkhart County and one of the only bilingual ones in the country. These are critical evidence-based interventions to reduce maternal and infant health disparities. I'm excited we are growing and will be welcoming new staff and patients."