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Tom Golisano gifts \$3.5 million to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center for new center for community health for people with special needs

by jmaloni

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An artist's rendering of the new Golisano Center for Community Health.

Gift is largest in medical center's history

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center has received a \$3.5 million gift, the largest in its history, from businessman and philanthropist Tom Golisano to support construction of an innovative new Golisano Center for Community Health.

The center will provide comprehensive integrated health care services to adults with special needs and their families, breaking down barriers to care, preventing individuals from falling through the cracks and helping them live with dignity. It is believed to be one of the few centers of its kind in the country.

The gift was announced today at a news conference at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center by Medical Center President and CEO Joseph A. Ruffolo and Golisano Foundation Director Ann M. Costello. The Golisano Foundation is one of the largest foundations in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to supporting programs that encourage and commit to inclusion, acceptance and opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



The center will house a range of services and programs, including primary care, mental health, "health home" care management, housing assistance, community outreach, satellite services, social services, health insurance enrollment, financial assistance counseling, wellness education and the training of health care professionals. The Child Advocacy Center of Niagara and Project Runway also will be located there.

"We are so very grateful to Mr. Golisano and the Golisano Foundation for their generous contribution and their commitment to our community here in Western New York," Ruffolo said. "They can be confident that their investment will improve the quality of life for thousands of people who will walk through the doors of the Golisano Center for Community Health for many years to come."

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Costello said, "We are honored to help Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center build this new center. People with special needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, have poorer health outcomes than those without disabilities. They have limited access to preventive and ongoing care, suffer with chronic conditions that go unmanaged, and have a hard time finding caregivers willing to treat them.

"Memorial's innovative approach to delivering health care will change that for our most vulnerable citizens. In this new center, people with special needs can access integrated primary care and other critical services at a single accessible location that leverages the resources of both a major medical center and community partners. Also important, health care providers will learn to care for people with special needs.

"This center is aligned with the 'Healthy Communities' initiative launched by Special Olympics with a major gift from Tom Golisano in 2012. We hope the center will be a model for providers in other regions. We will be looking closely at this initiative to better understand the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Niagara and Erie County region to assess future support."

"This commitment from the Golisano Foundation serves as such a strong endorsement for our incredible work in patient care - particularly for those underserved citizens most in need of our support," said Memorial Medical Center board member and development committee chairwoman Judith Nolan Powell. "It also reinvigorates our mission to serve as a safety net health care provider for the Niagara Frontier. We are eternally grateful."

Construction on the two-story 23,000-square-foot building is expected to begin in March 2015 and be completed by year's end. It will be located on a shovel-ready parcel situated next door to Memorial's ER1 Emergency Department and Heart Center of Niagara. A pedestrian walkway will connect Memorial's ER1/Heart Center building directly to the Golisano Center for Community Health, helping to avoid unnecessary emergency room visits.

The new Golisano Center for Community Health will house:

•**An integrated primary care and behavioral health center** directly connected to "health home" care management services. The co-location of these vital services will dismantle traditional silos and provide a physical environment conducive for multidisciplinary teams to work together on the coordination of care for persons with special needs.

•**A satellite office and client self-advocacy center for Rivershore Inc.**, an agency affiliated with People Inc. that serves individuals living with disabilities. The service groups located at the center will join forces with community agencies in helping persons living with disabilities tap into and utilize existing community resources, gain independence and achieve an improved quality of life.

•**The YMCA Buffalo Niagara will play a prominent role in advancing the center's wellness and community health promotion agenda** providing wellness education fitness training to at-risk persons, including the developmentally disabled, individuals with chronic diseases and others who need special instruction to engage in physical exercise.

•**The center's learning hub** will work with area universities as a site for internships and other workforce development opportunities in emerging health care fields such as care coordination, navigation and care management. It will provide classrooms for wellness and health education training for community residents and their caregivers - with an eye toward enabling them to self-manage their health and well-being. The learning hub also will feature a population health innovation center that will identify clusters of individuals suffering from chronic diseases within specific geographic locations (referred to as "hot spotting"), and serve as an incubator for the development of community-based health care strategies to address the needs within those targeted areas.

Memorial embarked on a transformation journey more than four years ago, from a traditional hospital to a center for community health in collaboration with many other providers and community agencies. The medical center is moving away from solely providing hospital-based episodic care to managing population health within the region, with a specific focus on a population with special needs that is far too often dependent on using hospital and emergency room resources.

"Our innovative, community-based, integrated service model, working in collaboration with many agencies, brings together health care, social support, wellness and education services tailored for an individual's specific needs - to improve their quality of life while providing care in a more cost-effective community setting," Ruffolo said. "The Golisano Center for Community Health accomplishes just that - it breaks down barriers and prevents individuals from falling through the cracks."

Memorial's investments in the city have been a catalyst for community renewal. The construction of the Heart Center and ER1, restoration of Schoellkopf Park and other medical center campus upgrades have been cited by many as the beginning of the comeback for the area. Construction of the Golisano Center for Community Health continues the development of the medical center's 10th Street campus from Pine Avenue to Ferry Avenue.

"Our development of community-based integrated service models of care will have a huge impact on workforce development, creating new jobs in emerging health care fields," Ruffolo added.

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Since 2003, the medical center has made more than \$62 million in capital improvements to its downtown Niagara Falls campus.

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center is a full-service, 171-bed regional medical center with extensive inpatient and outpatient services including The Heart Center of Niagara, Niagara Wellness Connection Center, Schoellkopf Health Center, Wound Center of Niagara, Diabetes & Endocrinology Center of Niagara, Niagara Metabolic & Bariatric Services and The OB/GYN Center at Niagara Falls Memorial. To learn more, visit NFMHC.org.

Tom Golisano - entrepreneur, philanthropist and civic leader - is the founder and chairman of the board of Paychex Inc., headquartered in Rochester. With more than 12,000 employees and 100 office locations nationwide, Paychex is a leading national provider of payroll, human resource, and benefit outsourcing solutions for more than a half-million small and medium-sized businesses.

He applied his pioneering spirit to establish the Golisano Foundation to help make the world a better place for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. His personal philanthropic contributions to hospitals, educational institutions and other organizations have totaled more than \$200 million.

To learn more about the Golisano Foundation, visit golisanofoundation.org.

Ann Costello has served as director of the Golisano Foundation since 1999. She has worked for more than 25 years in the nonprofit sector, primarily in the areas of human service administration, strategic planning, fund distribution and organizational policy development. She has redefined the foundation's role in the disability service arena as a proactive partner and catalyst for transformation, especially when it comes to the way communities support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



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