



Artist renderings of proposed community health center at Niagara Falls Memorial Hospital are unveiled Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2014.

Golisano Foundation donating \$3.5 million to Niagara Falls Memorial \$3.5 million donated to Memorial campus

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NIAGARA FALLS – The largest single charitable donation in its history will help Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center add a community health center focused on helping intellectually and developmentally disabled adults to its growing 10th Street campus.

Billionaire entrepreneur B. Thomas Golisano is donating \$3.5 million to Memorial, it was announced Wednesday, to help create the Golisano Center for Community Health, which will house a variety of medical services for a population that officials said often falls through the cracks of the health care system.

“The cause that’s closest to Tom Golisano’s heart, a cause and an issue that has touched his family, is to help those with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” said Golisano Foundation Director Ann M. Costello. “At the foundation and in much of his personal philanthropy, our mission is to target initiatives that encourage and commit to inclusion, acceptance and opportunity for those people with intellectual disabilities.”

The total cost of the project, which has been in the works about a year, is pegged at about \$5 million. A 23,000-square-foot structure to house the center will be built on a 10th Street parcel owned by the hospital. The facility will be connected to its Heart Center and emergency room. Hospital officials believe it will be one of the few centers of its kind in the country.

The hospital has approached other private foundations looking for the remaining funds, said Joseph A. Ruffolo, Memorial’s president and chief executive officer.

Adults with special needs typically have much less support available than children facing the same challenges, Ruffolo said. In Niagara County, there are an estimated 3,000 adults and 1,000 children who

have developmental and intellectual disabilities. Only about half of them routinely receive the care they need, he said.

“This must become our community priority,” Ruffolo told about 100 people gathered for a news conference on the site of the proposed new center.

The new facility will offer primary and behavioral health services, a community outreach office and satellite offices for other agencies that serve the intellectually and developmentally disabled, including Rivershore and the YMCA Buffalo Niagara.

It also will be the new location of Memorial’s health home, which provides services to individuals with serious mental health issues, chronic health issues and those with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

The health home is currently located on the seventh floor of the hospital’s parking garage, along with some primary care offices. The health home partners with 57 community agencies, some of which will have kiosks in the new center, Ruffolo said.

The new center also will include a “learning hub” that will provide internship and other workforce development opportunities in areas of care coordination, navigation and care management.

In about a year’s time, Memorial expects to have an additional 10 care managers on staff, Ruffolo said.

Golisano, who founded Paychex and formerly owned the Buffalo Sabres, has given more than \$200 million in contributions to educational institutions, hospitals and other organizations, Memorial officials said.

In 2008, he gave \$10 million to Niagara University for a new science center, which opened as the B. Thomas Golisano Center for Integrated Sciences last October.

Construction on Memorial’s new center is expected to begin in March, with an opening slated for December 2015.

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On the web: Take a virtual tour of the planned facility by reading [this story](#) on buffalonews.com.

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