

# Hospice project poised to create jobs

Work on \$10M,  
10-bed center to  
start early next year

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Community Home Health & Hospice has kicked off its efforts to inform neighbors of its upcoming \$10 million Vancouver construction project, expected to add up to 80 jobs during construction, as well as 30 permanent health care positions and four in administration.

The Longview-headquartered nonprofit's Clark County operations are currently based in leased space at 14508 N.E. 20th Ave. Services are provided from within Southwest

Washington Medical Center's Ray Hickey Hospice House, the only inpatient hospice center in the county.

"(Ray Hickey and Community Home Health) are two separate agencies, and patients have choices where to go," said CEO Greg Pang about the potential for competition. He added that Clark County has two hospitals and can probably support two hospices.

Crews will break ground in early 2012 on a site at 3100 N.W. 136th Circle, Vancouver, where Community Home Health & Hospice intends to open a 10-bed center by December 2012.

The first phase of construction — 32,000 square feet — will also include administrative offices, a grief support center

and a memorial garden. The nonprofit could later build an 8,000 square foot, 10-bed wing, but will wait until it secures more funding.

The site will be the second hospice center in Clark County, where the population of people 70 years and older is expected to double between 2010 and 2030.

"We're here to meet not only the current needs, but the future needs of Clark County," said Marykay Morelli, a spokeswoman for the nonprofit.

Clark County Commissioners approved a 14-month "fee holiday" last October that waives many of the impact, inspection and application costs for the new center. Morelli said the fee break, 500 percent growth in demand for the non-

profit's services in the last six years, attractive financing rates and low real estate prices all spurred the nonprofit to start the project now.

Columbia Home Health & Hospice purchased the 6-acre parcel on 136th Circle for \$1.5 million. A half acre adjacent to the site was also donated.

The center is in the process of securing \$7.5 million in loans to fund construction. It will also use another \$2.5 million from its own reserves.

In addition, the nonprofit is soliciting donations to help with costs. While at a recent Hazel Dell/Salmon Creek



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print edition

Business Association meeting, a donor — who declined to give a name — committed to contributing \$1,000.

CEO Pang said the hospice provider gets about 60 percent of its revenue from Medicare, 20 percent from Medicaid and the rest

from private insurance and donations. He added that as a nonprofit, all the revenues it makes go back into providing services.

The center is currently in the site approval phase, with its conditional use permit application due back by July. Its certificate of need application will head to the Washington Department of Health in November.