

# Swedish Covenant's New Women's Health Center Breaks Down Barriers

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Women's Health Center

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LINCOLN SQUARE — From its private consultation rooms to its advanced mammography technology to its vases of bright purple flowers, no detail was overlooked in the creation of [Swedish Covenant Hospital's](#) new \$8 million Mayora Rosenberg Women's Health Center, which officially opened Thursday.



The Center's ribbon cutting ceremony served as the

culmination of a campaign that began in 2012, when the hospital identified a need to provide women across Chicago's North Side with access to high-quality healthcare focused on their specific issues, according to Audrey Silver, co-chairwoman of the Center's fundraising efforts.

"I feel that it's about time that women's health concerns are addressed," said Silver, a nurse herself.

"This facility will empower women through education," said Silver. "We have the technology and the compassion to really make it happen."

Part of Swedish Covenant's broader Women's Health Initiative, the Center, 5145 N. California Ave., aims to break down the economic, cultural and language barriers that keep many women in the hospital's service area from receiving the treatment they need, said Mark Newton, Swedish Covenant Hospital CEO and president.

Mammography is an anchor service, along with dermatology, nutrition and bone health, according to Shannon Sikkila, one of the Center's "health navigators."

The navigators have been employed to help coordinate a woman's care, Sikkila explained, including connecting patients to additional resources both within and outside of the hospital and making individuals aware of options like a grant program under which Swedish Covenant provides free mammograms to uninsured and under-insured patients.

Situated in a area where 40 percent of the people the hospital treats do not speak English, the Center worked with a dozen social service and nonprofit agencies — like Korean American Community Services and the Indo-American Center — to help determine services most lacking for such a diverse population, Silver said.

"It was all about, 'What do we need to have in place?'" she said. "Women are really the link to providing

healthcare to their entire family."

As a result, the Center offers childcare services and evening and weekend appointments, has trained medical interpreters who speak a variety of languages and, out of respect for religious groups and cultural practices, it also constructed women-only patient areas, private dressing rooms and has female doctors, nurses and technicians available across disciplines.

"You'll find women from all over the world ... being treated in a way that is culturally aware," said [Ald. Pat O'Connor](#) (40th), who helped secure \$2.4 million in [Tax Increment Finance](#) dollars for the Center.

"These types of investments make a neighborhood," said the alderman, citing the hospital's role as an engine for the area's economic and physical well-being.

"This hospital is truly a community hospital. It has kept me alive through a bout of cancer. We have seen births of my family here and we have seen the full circle of life," said O'Connor.

"Look around," he said. "You tell me if this is not worth a \$2.4 million investment from the city of Chicago."

Silver, who came close to tears a number of times during the grand opening ceremony, admitted that she had often questioned whether too much money was being spent on niceties like artwork and decor that were a major departure from the sterile environments more typically associated with hospitals.

Standing in the completed Center, though, she said it had been worth every penny.

"I was completely enveloped by a sense of comfort and warmth."

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