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KCHD Unveils State-Of-The-Art Mobile Health Unit

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA – The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department team unveiled the agency’s new Mobile Health Unit today during a brief ceremony to dedicate the 40-foot custom-built coach vehicle, which is designed to allow KCHD clinic staff to more easily provide public health services to people throughout Kanawha County.

KCHD’s Mobile Health Unit cost just under \$600,000 and was made possible through a combination of private funding from The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation and federal funding from an Enhancing Laboratory Capacity grant. It was designed with guidance from the Kanawha County Emergency Ambulance Authority.

Dr. Steven Eshenaur, KCHD Health Officer, welcomed invited guests – many of whom played a critical role in the design, ordering and purchase of the RV-style vehicle – and promised that KCHD and its partners will make good use of the Mobile Health Unit.

“There are so many organizations and individuals who made Kanawha-Charleston Health Department’s new Mobile Health Unit possible,” Eshenaur said. “We owe them a debt of gratitude – from the Kanawha County Emergency Ambulance Authority, whose experts helped us design something that is truly modern, to the visionary funders at the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, who understand the unique needs of a vast county that is both urban and rural.

“KCHD’s mission extends beyond the capital city’s boundaries to the most populous county in the state. Disease and good health know no boundaries. Now, we won’t either,” Eshenaur said. “Do you need vaccines or testing and find it difficult to get to our downtown Charleston facility from Montgomery, Pocatalico, Nitro or Clendenin? We can now bring clinic services to your city, town or neighborhood. We are thankful for those who not only saw a need, but also took action to make it a reality. Public health should be adaptable and responsive. Believe me, KCHD’s Mobile Health Unit won’t be idle.”

The RV-style vehicle was ordered in October 2020 from Matthews Specialty Vehicles of Greensboro, N.C. The pandemic delayed production, but the vehicle was delivered earlier this month. It features bump outs that expand to make two full exam rooms.

Dr. Sherri A. Young, D.O, M.B.A., FAAFP, was at KCHD's helm when the unit was ordered, and is now the Interim Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. She spoke today about the vehicle's inception. "The KCHD Mobile Health Unit is a result of vision and collaboration," Young said. "Having the ability to respond to the needs of patients by bringing medical services into our communities will be a valuable tool in improving healthcare delivery. I look forward to seeing the tremendous impacts of this very important innovation."

Dr. Michelle Foster is president and CEO of the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, whose funding helped make possible the purchase of KCHD's Mobile Health Unit. She was represented by Megan Simpson, program officer with TGKVF. "The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation is happy to have invested in the Mobile Health Unit. We know it will help vulnerable residents access healthcare services, ultimately improving their quality of life," Foster said.

Lance Wheeler, Kanawha County Commissioner, spoke of the impact to the communities in the county. "The Kanawha County Commission is proud to see Kanawha-Charleston Health Department's new Mobile Health Unit. The custom-designed vehicle will be equipped with necessary materials and services that can reach more people in the county to get them the help they need."

City of Charleston Mayor Amy Goodwin talked about the importance of providing accessibility to public health services. "The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department does a lot of great work in our Charleston community and throughout Kanawha County -- helping ensure the health and wellbeing of all our citizens. This new Mobile Health Unit will help the Health Department better serve our communities by meeting people where they are, and making healthcare more accessible to folks throughout the county," Goodwin said.

Representatives from the offices of Governor Jim Justice, U.S. Senators Shelley Moore Capito and Joe Manchin carried well wishes from state and federal officials. Chesapeake Mayor Melissa Hill and Dunbar Mayor Scott Elliott represented their communities in anticipation of more personalized public health services where they reside.

Other organizations represented included The Kanawha County Emergency Ambulance Authority, the Charleston Area Alliance and Kanawha County Schools.