

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Celebrating 10 Years of Providing Access to Primary Care

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- This year, Columbus Neighborhood Health Centers, Inc. (CNHC) celebrates its tenth anniversary of providing a medical home to almost 20,000 Columbus residents. CNHC began nearly forty years ago as the neighborhood, all volunteer health centers. When the East Central Community Organization's center failed in the early 90s, the City of Columbus stepped in, paid the bills and continued to provide neighborhood physicians for the Eastside through the Department of Public Health.

By 1995, in an effort to achieve economies of scale, the City pulled all of the neighborhood centers together under one umbrella group called Columbus Neighborhood Health Center. However, providing primary care to residents was beyond the scope of the City's mission. Consequently, in 1997, the City's administrators were awarded federal dollars to help incorporate the CNHC network. Known as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), this federal program is the most successful public/private partnership in US history. This relationship between CNHC, the City of Columbus, the federal government and Franklin County has the sole mission of providing access to primary care for residents of the city's neighborhoods.

This community partnership enables CNHC's 170 dedicated physicians and staff to operate five state-of-the-art health centers providing nearly 80,000 patient visits every year. These high-touch family practices feature internal medicine, pediatrics, OB/GYN, dental, vision, podiatry, social services and nutrition education classes. In addition, healthcare providers participate in community programs to assist patients with smoking cessation, immunizations, pharmacy services and a myriad of other education courses, including diabetes self-management. As an FQHC, the centers offers interpreter services for non-English speaking patients and transportation for patients who lack the means to get to their doctor's appointments.

CNHC works with more than 150 community organizations to improve and promote access to primary care services. To that end, the CNHC network will install centralized scheduling in 2007 to improve customer service and provide a single access point and phone number for all patients. The call center will be staffed with bilingual professionals who will be able to schedule patients into any one of the five centers depending on their location and the services needed. The call center will provide information, directions to each site and help new patients establish a medical home by completing all the necessary paperwork prior to their first visit.

Looking ahead, CNHC is planning other major projects aimed at increasing access to healthcare within the City of Columbus. Moving the CNHC health care network to an Electronic Medical Records program will transfer written documents to computers, allow patients to move from one center to another to receive specialty services such as podiatry, vision or dental without the cumbersome dynamic of moving their paper records.

In addition, the network will be relocating the Hilltop Health Center into a much larger state-of-the-art, 36,000 sq. ft. facility, which will triple capacity to nearly 12,000 patients. This \$9 million project is funded by the City of Columbus and will be located inside the old Engine House number 17 on West Broad Street. The new health center will be easily accessed from every neighborhood on the Westside and is on the COTA line. Construction will begin in 2007 with an anticipated opening by mid-2009. The CNHC primary care network is the largest, fastest growing urban health centers in Ohio and continues to play a vital role in providing primary care for many central Ohio residents.

Columbus Neighborhood Health Center, Inc. (CNHC) is a nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and a proud member of the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers and the National Association of Community Health Centers. For more information about the Family Dollar Grand Re-Opening Events or about CNHC and the services they provide, go to www.colnhc.org.

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