

New VNA clinic aims to improve heart care

BY MATT BRENNAN

For The Beacon-News

More than 2,000 patients who were seen at the Visit-

ing Nurse Association in Aurora last year were given some type of cardiac-related diagnosis.

The VNA on Highland Avenue offers medical care for the uninsured and underinsured. With those type of numbers, officials at the VNA quickly recognized the need to expand their care.

On Tuesday afternoon, the VNA held the grand opening for the new Aurora Community Heart Clinic. Since September, Dr. Santosh Gill has been seeing cardiac patients at the VNA once a week.

The plan is to expand that to three days a week as soon as the demand is there for expanded services, Gill said. Gill will be working with a physician's assistant at the Aurora site to provide care to low-income cardiovascular patients in the Aurora area.

"The need is great and we are so appreciative of



Board member Bonnie Resch and cardiologist Santosh Gill visit during an open house Tuesday at the new Aurora Community Heart Clinic at the VNA. | MARY BETH NOLAN-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Dr. Gill and her mission," VNA CEO Linnea Windel said during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new clinic.

The expanded care at the VNA is being partially funded by the Dunham Fund in Aurora. Executive Director Robert Vaughan represented the fund at the grand opening.

"We think this is great," Vaughan said. "There's a need for this in the Aurora area."

The Dunham Fund made a \$125,000 donation and challenged Gill to raise the rest. She was able to do that through soliciting help from area hospitals and holding fundraisers, she said.

The need for this type

of care is huge, she said. Gill said heart disease is the leading cause of death both nationally and in Kane County, but there was no specialty care at the VNA.

"It was one of the needs our community needed to fill," she said. "With a large immigrant population, our challenges are great."

With the type of testing and procedures that the patients will need, the funding will be spent rather quickly, Gill said. They will be continuously raising funds in the future to provide this type of service in the area, she said.

"We know we can't be everything for everybody, but every dent we make is useful," she said.

The recent changes to the health care legislation won't have any immediate effect on these patients, Gill said.

"You have to go with what you have available and then expand on it," she said.