



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Brian Panique (left), senior director of gifts for MUSC, talks Thursday with donors Chris and Dee Dee Gibson (right) at the groundbreaking for the Medical University of South Carolina's Sea Islands Medical Pavilion.

MUSC clinic to bring emergency, specialty care to Kiawah, Seabrook

BY TOM CORWIN
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JOHNS ISLAND — For Chris Gibson, the grassy field off Seabrook Island Road looks like a physical therapy clinic where he can also continue the boxing classes that help with his Parkinson's disease.

"The exercise is my medicine," said Gibson, who splits his time between homes on Kiawah Island and Austin, Texas.

For others, it will be a much-needed Emergency Room that is nearly an hour closer to those coastal communities than those in Charleston.

Officials from Medical University of South Carolina and members of the community gathered Sept. 8 to hold a groundbreaking ceremony for the MUSC Sea Island Medical Pavilion. Some details and planning are still being determined, but the

hope is to have it open by the end of 2023 or early 2024, said MUSC Health CEO Patrick Cawley.

The clinic, which will include around-the-clock emergency care and medical specialties like cardiology, orthopedics and physical therapy, is a result of a public-private partnership that included South Street Partners, which donated the land for the clinic worth nearly \$5 million. Soon after starting development on Kiawah a decade ago, the company surveyed residents and the need for around-the-clock medical care "came through loud and clear," said Chris Randolph, a partner in South Street. The company and MUSC have been talking about the project since 2014.

"We've been at this for some time," Randolph said.

The clinic fits with one of MUSC's core beliefs that "the best care is delivered locally,"

said MUSC President David Cole. The groundbreaking "represents the first tangible step towards fulfilling the expectations and the needs of the entire Sea Islands community," he said.

It would also not be possible without donations and support from members of that community, Cole said. That includes people like Gibson, who with his wife, Dee Dee, has been coming to Kiawah for 40 years. The whole time, she has wanted a hospital nearby, and for a simple reason.

"We're not getting any younger," Dee Dee Gibson said.

That is a concern for residents and one of the reasons Kiawah is donating \$1 million to the effort for green space, said Mayor John Labriola said.

"The accessibility (of health care) has been a real concern," he said. Getting an ER is "a really wonderful thing to hear."

The project has moved forward and gotten through the state's Certificate of Need process despite the fact that the seasonal nature of the population and the seeming lack of permanent residents normally wouldn't fit for such a clinic, Cawley said.

"Health care, like a lot of things, is built upon population," he said. But officials continued forward with the idea that "this community is going to support this project," Cawley said. "We just need to build it."

Some major health crises, such as heart attacks, strokes or major trauma "are absolutely time-dependent on you getting to an emergency department," where patients can be treated and stabilized, he said. "This definitely cuts down on any problems that way."

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