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Anchorum gives \$20M to Christus St. Vincent efforts as part of multi-year plan to boost health

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Dr. Kira MacDougall, a hematology and oncology specialist, listens to patient Patricia Rael's heart during their first appointment together Monday at Christus St. Vincent Regional Cancer Center. The center is expected to be completed next year with the help of funding from an Anchorum Health Foundation \$20 million cash infusion.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

Santa Fe's cash-flush Anchorum Health Foundation is funneling \$20 million to Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center as part of its multiyear plan to improve health in Northern New Mexico, the organization announced this week.

About half that money will go to help finish construction on the hospital's new cancer center, which is expected to be completed next year, while the rest will go toward helping Christus St. Vincent recruit and retain employees, supporting clinical programs and, in some instances, expanding them.

"It's not just access to care, but access to quality care that Anchorum is really committed to," said Jerry Jones, Anchorum's president and CEO, on Monday morning. "This partnership allows us to ensure those types of things."



Phy Encluna adds the "e" to aware while decorating the lobby of the Christus St. Vincent Regional Cancer Center in preparation for Breast Cancer Awareness Month on Monday.

Gabriela Campos/The New Mexican

The \$20 million infusion to Christus St. Vincent is just the beginning of what Anchorum is calling its "Clinical Support Fund." The foundation plans to put about \$109 million total into the fund over the next decade, at a pace of about \$10 million per year after this year, Jones said.

It's the largest funding commitment the foundation has made since it announced its plan to spend some \$200 million on its quest to make the region healthier.

It's also a bit of what-goes-around-comes-around for the two tightly allied organizations; Anchorum Health Foundation is the new iteration of Anchorum St. Vincent, a local nonprofit that for years held a half-share of Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center and its related local holdings.

Last year, Anchorum St. Vincent divested from the hospital, transferring its share to Texas-based Christus Health in exchange for \$500 million over the next decade — the source of the \$200 million it's dedicating to the region.

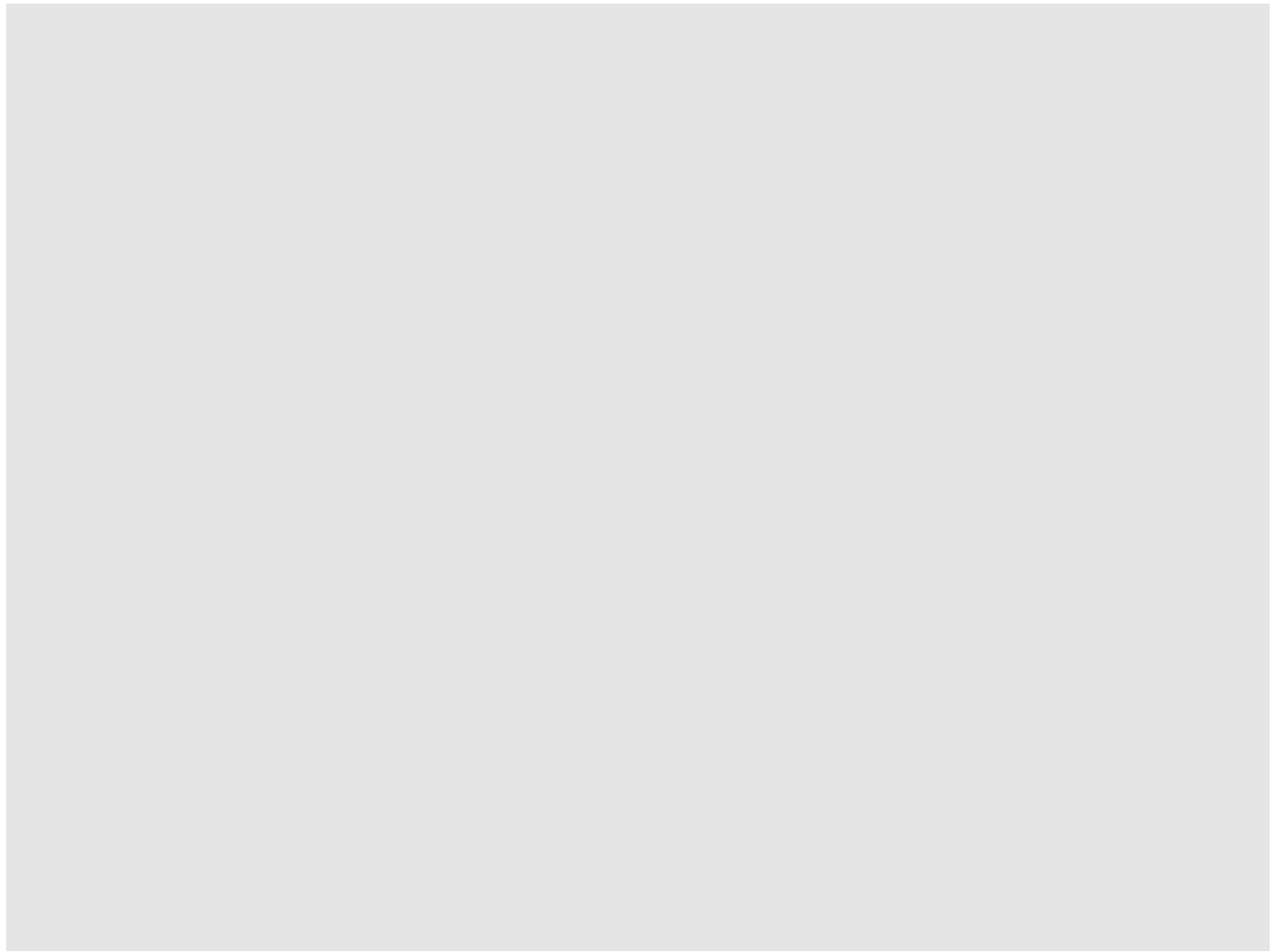
The newly announced Clinical Support Fund will make up more than half of that spending plan. In July, Anchorum pledged \$25 million to five Northern New Mexico community foundations that fund efforts to solve problems related to health, but in a more upstream fashion — barriers to housing, transportation, education and more.

The new \$20 million for Christus St. Vincent comes at a key time for the hospital, whose leaders have said in recent months closures and downsizing at other facilities around the region have resulted in far higher numbers of patients seeking care in Santa Fe.

Lillian Montoya, president and CEO of Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center, said Monday the \$20 million, which actually began coming in at the beginning of Anchorum's fiscal year in late June, will go for a whole host of uses, including hiring new providers.

“The resources are allowing us to not only continue our aggressive work at recruiting, but to have more attention around specialty recruitment so that we can find people for our community that we haven't typically had,” Montoya said.

For example, the hospital has a new rheumatologist and is working on hiring endocrinology specialists and new providers for its new Center for Healthy Aging.



Dr. Kira MacDougall puts notes into patient Patricia Rael's file at the Christus St. Vincent Regional Cancer Center last month. The center is now officially a "comprehensive community cancer program," an accreditation it received from the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer.

Gabriela Campos/New Mexican file photo

Christus St. Vincent will use some of the money not just to build the physical cancer center building, but also to expand its cancer center's work, including the clinical trials it participates in. The hospital is launching what Montoya said is called a "lung nodule tumor board," which by a combination of scans, artificial intelligence technology and the hospital's own staff is working to diagnose and treat lung nodules earlier in some patients.

Hiring will also be key to some expansions Montoya hopes to make to the hospital's currently small operations in Los Alamos and Las Vegas, N.M. Down the line, Montoya said hospital leaders also may also consider opening new clinics in Edgewood and Taos, depending in part on how many patients Christus continues to see commuting from those communities.

“[The money is] allowing us to put more toes in the water, if you will, into some of the rural communities that are experiencing shortages of providers and care,” Montoya said.

Much of Northern New Mexico has struggled to maintain health care services in recent years, including Las Vegas, where Alta Vista Regional Hospital shut down its labor and delivery and intensive care units in recent years. That doesn’t mean Christus is expanding onto entirely barren ground; the hospital has sparred fiercely in recent years with Santa Fe-based Nexus Health — formerly known as New Mexico Cancer Associates — over recruiting practices, competition and hospital privileges.

Jones said Anchorum doesn’t view Christus St. Vincent’s planned expansions “from a competitive standpoint,” and said patient care access is the main goal — and a lofty one in a state where patients often complain of lengthy waits to get in to see many types of specialists.

“This is about just ensuring people can actually get care ... in a timely way,” Jones said.

The fund will also support the hospital’s long-running family residency program that trains new physicians, and to “expand the ranks” of the obstetrics team at Christus St. Vincent, now directly employed by a third party since this spring.

The hospital also plans to expand staff and training for its trauma team, which is seeing an increased demand from across the region.

“We get a lot more transfers today from our surrounding communities via helicopter than ever before for trauma services,” Montoya said. “... As we’re feeling ... the responsibility to care for more, we just want to make sure that it remains a very stable and strong program to meet the growing demand.”

Jones said Monday Anchorum leaders are excited about the announcement, which he said sets a plan in motion for the next several years.

“We’re just proud to be able to help create this funding there so that Lillian and her team can go out and actively recruit today as opposed to thinking, ‘Oh, we’re going to have to wait for the funding come to come in before we can start to talk to folks,’ ” Jones said. “The fact that we’re already thinking two or three years down the road gives them the assurance to be able to get that pipeline of workforce underway and here in Santa Fe today.”



Anchorum Health Foundation unveils plan to pump \$25M to Northern N.M. community foundations

Christus St. Vincent details plans for two-story, \$80 million cancer center





Christus leaders defend changes as evidence of growth, not new values



Anchorum, Christus St. Vincent announce deal on ownership

Takeaways

Anchorum Health Foundation is giving \$20 million to Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center as part of its decade-long plan to improve health in Northern New Mexico.

The hospital plans to use the money for recruiting and hiring new providers, which leaders say will allow it to expand its footprint in the region and serve more patients.

The money is just the first installment of what Anchorum says will be a \$109 million investment in its “Clinical Support Fund,” which comprises more than half the money the foundation plans to spend after divesting last year from Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center and its local clinics.

\$250K grant for LANL Foundation will pay for science kits, teacher development

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