

Original Ruth's Chris to Serve up Health Care

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Ruth's Hospitality Group has donated the site of Ruth's Chris Steak House on Broad Street in New Orleans to Tulane University for the creation of the Ruth U. Fertel/Tulane Community Health Center, officials announced today (July 10) at a news conference. The audience included a number of current and former waitresses who have served up sizzling steaks for decades.

Tulane's neighborhood-based healthcare initiatives focus on meeting the needs of residents in neighborhoods severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina, particularly those who are uninsured without other options, says Dr. Karen Desalvo, vice dean for community affairs and health policy. (Interview by Ryan Rivet)

The clinic is named in honor of the late Ruth Fertel, who worked as a lab technician at Tulane University School of Medicine before she founded the famed steak restaurant in New Orleans' mid-city neighborhood.

Among those who spoke at the news conference, Fertel's son, Randy Fertel, commented on how the donation of the property honors his mother's legacy. "Reopening what became the flagship Ruth's Chris as the Tulane Community Health Center makes my mind reel: it completes circles within circles."

Linking Ruth Fertel's work in the restaurant business with her support of education and health care, he added, "There is no education without health and there is no health without education ... Mom would totally understand the link between food, especially her food, and therapy. That's how restaurants got their name: they are restorative. "

The neighborhood-based "medical home" on Broad Street will provide care to patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

The 9,200 square-foot building and surrounding property at 711 N. Broad St. were appraised at \$600,000 in 2006. Tulane will relocate its Tulane Community Health Center at Covenant House to the new site. With more than double the space of the current facility, doctors will be able to accommodate more patients and offer expanded adult and pediatric services to treat entire families.

"Every aspect of the community and its leadership are involved to ensure that these patient-centered community 'medical homes' provide the services neighborhoods need to heal â€" both physically and mentally," said [Dr. Karen DeSalvo](#), vice dean for [community affairs and health policy](#) at Tulane.



The Ruth U. Fertel/Tulane Community Health Center at 711 N. Broad St. will more than double the space of the current Tulane mid-city healthcare facility, allowing doctors to accommodate more patients and expand adult and pediatric services to treat entire families. (Rendering provided by Campo Architects)

Tulane currently serves nearly 900 patients from the Treme, mid-city and surrounding areas at its existing Covenant House site at 611 N. Rampart St., which opened in September 2005. The [new health center](#) will have a capacity to serve more than 1,200 patients per month and will offer primary care to all ages, mental and behavioral health services, geriatric care and reproductive health services.

The state of Louisiana has approved \$1 million for the renovation of the donated commercial building that will house the relocated and expanded Tulane University Community Health Center, allowing the New Orleans Office of Recovery and Development Administration to access federal Community Development Block Grant funds needed to implement the project.

The funding comes from the Long-Term Community Recovery Program, a \$700 million pool of federal money set aside by the [Louisiana Recovery Authority](#) and Office of Community Development to help local governments rebuild and implement long-term recovery plans.

The \$1 million in disaster recovery funds will bridge the gap in the \$3.1 million project, helping create a Patient Centered Medical Home model that offers expanded primary and prevention programs for chronic disease management.

Construction on the center is expected to begin this fall. Plans call for the clinic to be open by summer 2010.