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## Belden's name graces new dental clinic

MELVIN MASON – Staff Writer



DERBY — Bert Belden could not hide her emotions.

Clutching flowers and lightly dabbing away tears, the widow of former state Rep. Richard Belden said she was delighted to see the new lower-income dental clinic bearing his name open its doors on Tuesday. She was also still missing the man who was her spouse for more than 50 years.

"Dick was always the one who spoke," Bert Belden said. "Thank you." More than 100 people came out Tuesday morning as Hill Health Center and TEAM Inc. officially opened the doors to the Richard O. Belden Dental Clinic inside the TEAM building on Elizabeth Street.

The 5,000-square-foot space will house the larger Hill Health Center dental clinic and the Parent Child Resource Center's expanded outpatient treatment and crisis stabilization programs.

Belden, who died last August, was responsible for securing \$900,000 in state funds to help build the \$1.19 million clinic.

The audience at the dedication took a tour of the new facility, which will be operated by Hill Health Corp. The new clinic, with six dental chairs, will replace an older and smaller clinic that had just two chairs. The clinic will serve people regardless of health coverage.

"It's exciting to see," said Dr. Alexandra Chan, director of Hill Health Dental Services. "We have three times more chairs and we'll get to see more patients. It's very important for the community."

Speakers who knew Belden spoke thankfully of his efforts to get the clinic opened, namely working to get the state dollars for the project in about two months time. They also remarked that he probably would not have made an appearance.

"If Dick was here, he probably wouldn't be here because his name is attached to the building," said Lt. Gov. Michael Fedele said.

But Fedele said Belden knew about how significant it would be for the Naugatuck Valley.

"This is something that's very important for the community." Fedele said.

Gary Spinner, chief financial officer for Hill Health, said building the center was "a real project of teamwork." He said everyone else who worked on it should be happy. "This is really a remarkable accomplishment and a testament to the work of this partnership," Spinner said.

The clinic is expected to open its doors to patients later in the month.

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