

POCONO RECORD

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By: Kathryn Rubright and Brian Myszkowski

St. Luke's breaks ground at Smithfield Gateway, joins Children's Hospital Association

The developers behind Smithfield Gateway held a ceremonial groundbreaking on Thursday, celebrating the real construction starting across the road on the newest St. Luke's University Health Network location.

Some services from the network's existing location on East Brown Street in East Stroudsburg will move to the new 40,000-square-foot building on U.S. Route 209: family practice, dermatology, gastroenterology, obstetrics and mammography, according to Don Seiple, president of St. Luke's Monroe campus. A pediatric practice will also be moving to Smithfield Gateway.

New services will include Care Now (an urgent care center), physical therapy and endocrinology, Seiple said.

St. Luke's will vacate one East Brown Street building, while the obstetrics move "does create opportunities to grow our heart and vascular center that's over there right now," Seiple said.

"There will be a relocation of some jobs, and a creation of some new jobs out of this project, so it's a little bit of both," he said.

The network hopes to be operating out of the new location by late January or early February of 2023.

While the new location is less than 2 miles from the East Brown Street offices, it may be more appealing to patients who live farther north. St. Luke's often gets requests for more services from "folks that live up 209 and come down this way," Seiple said.

Legend Properties CEO Jim DePetris thanked the various politicians, officials and funders who have made the project possible before the key players gathered for the ceremonial groundbreaking. He recalled the phone call that started it all, when Charles Kirkwood told DePetris he wanted to sell him the Mosier Dairy Farm property.

"Looking back on how challenging this project has been, I have often thought that I maybe should have said, 'Sorry, Mr. Kirkwood, I think you have the wrong number.'"

That sale was completed in 2015. Much of the complication stems from the need to widen Route 209, which already experiences traffic backups and is busy enough to cause long waits for safe opportunities to turn left onto the road.

"It took us literally three years to pull the permit" for the 209 work, DePetris told the Pocono Record last fall, "because it was very complicated, because there are a lot of right-of-ways, and PennDOT will only issue a permit when you have all of the right-of-ways. So we worked really hard to get all of them, and we got the permit in early September."

The Smithfield Gateway location is just one of several endeavors that St. Luke's is currently involved in, including numerous efforts to expand pediatric care throughout northeast Pennsylvania.

On Wednesday, the health network announced that it has joined the Children's Hospital Association, a coalition that serves as "the national voice of more than 220 children's hospitals ... advancing child health through innovation in the quality, cost and delivery of care in children's hospitals and health systems."

"Participation in the Children's Hospital Association offers us access to a network of institutions and people who understand the unique health care needs of children and how to best address them," Dr. Jennifer Janco, Chair of Pediatrics at St. Luke's University Health Network, said in a statement.

St. Luke's has been expanding its pediatric care and specialty services over the past few years, opening an eight-bed Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at their Bethlehem campus in 2020.



DEPG's James DePetris, front, joins local politicians and business partners for a ceremonial shoveling following the announcement that St. Luke's University Health Network will serve as an anchor for the Smithfield/Gateway project. BRIAN MYSZKOWSKI

Later this year, the network plans on opening "the first and only free-standing pediatric specialty care center" in Center Valley, offering services for nephrology, gastroenterology, cardiology, pulmonology, developmental, neurology, endocrinology, child and adolescent behavioral health, physical therapy and occupational therapy, pediatric primary care, and pediatric nutrition.

On top of that, St. Luke's pediatric inpatient unit is currently under renovation and will be relocated to the Bethlehem campus, adjacent to the PICU.

A release from SLUHN also notes that the network has made significant capital investments in new infrastructure over the past few years in order to help with ongoing pediatric care growth in a mission to provide "comprehensive, convenient pediatric care throughout all the communities the Network serves."

"We welcome St. Luke's to our national community," Mark Wietecha, Children's Hospital Association President and CEO, said in a statement. "Our ability to transform children's health for the better takes all of us working together and learning from each other for greater impact."