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Iowa City Hospice host a ribbon cutting

BY [CORY PORTER](#) | OCTOBER 10, 2014 5:00 AM

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The job of Iowa City Hospice employees takes them all over the city to help patients and families at home, in hospitals, or at assisted-living facilities.

On Thursday, however, the Iowa City Hospice invited the community to come to it, as it hosted a ribbon-cutting event to show off exterior and interior renovations to the main office.

Although most hospice employees spend their time in the field, the renovation of the offices will give the facility the chance to grow, run more efficiently, and provide a more welcoming space to patients and family members visiting.

“We have always been proud of the care that we provide in patients’ homes and in facilities, and now we’re proud of the office that we have,” said Erin Feldman, a clinical leader at the hospice.

It wasn’t necessary to tear the building down and start over; workers changed the layout to better suit the type of work hospice care requires.

The project started in the fall of 2013 and was finished in the spring of this year, with the help of Rohrbach Associates PC Architects and Apex Construction Co.

The hospice office was originally an OB-GYN clinic with numerous small, private offices, so the layout wasn’t conducive to the type of work the hospice does.

“When you turned a corner, you could never find the way out, and that’s what this was — it was kind of a maze of small offices,” Feldman said.

Construction workers replaced carpet and repainted rooms, but the most important change was the removal of a few walls.

“We made it more open, so that we could grow,” said Maggie Elliott, the executive director of the hospice.

Elliott emphasized the the creation of these “team meeting offices” was important for the type of work the hospice does. When a nurse, a chaplain, a social worker, and a physician want to discuss patient care, they can come to one of these larger, more open rooms, she said.

The hospice building is just one part of the overall Towncrest revitalization efforts by Iowa City leaders.

In 2011, the city declared it an urban-renewal area, and the city “came up with different financial incentives to encourage reinvestment, the rehabilitation of older buildings or new construction,” said Tracy Hightshoe, the city community development coordinator.

Because Towncrest is one of her assigned areas, Hightshoe’s job was to work with the different businesses in the area to try to come up with ways to revitalize them.

Her work with the Iowa City Hospice involved a façade improvement grant, in which the city matches participants \$25,000, or up to \$50,000, to improve the exteriors of their building.

“We think it’s great that they decided to reinvest, and we hope our decision to help them with the exterior helped them stay here and reinvest in the building,” Hightshoe said.

Although the construction may seem minor, to Feldman and Elliott, it opens up a whole new level of growth and care for them.

“Hospice is about an interdisciplinary team; it’s holistic care of patients and families from their medical needs to their emotional needs to their spiritual needs, and now we [can] provide the environment where those individuals can collaborate on individual care,” Feldman said.

In today's issue: