

Let's get physical

Illinois Injury Resource Center provides rehabilitation services to help people get back to work

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PEORIA - There's life in the old dairy building again.

The Illinois Work Injury Resource Center is the first tenant in the Roszell Dairy building, a structure that sat empty at 720 SW Washington St. since the Sealtest Co., the last occupant, moved out.

The work injury center is headed up by Pete Duvendack, director of operations, and Michael Davis, director of business development.

"What makes us unique is that we combine an occupational health clinic and industrial rehabilitation in one facility," said Duvendack.

There's no shortage of potential patients out there. Every day, an estimated 36,000 Americans suffer a non-fatal injury or work-related illness on the job, said Lisa Cullen, author of "A Job To Die For."

Seven percent of U.S. workers are injured or made ill on the job every year, at an annual cost of \$155.5 billion annually, she said.

Workers injured on the job in central Illinois can receive care from therapists on staff as well as rehabilitation in the center's gym, a room that takes advantage of the building's 18-foot ceilings, said Duvendack.

"We'll have a whole range of exercise equipment in there along with stairs and platforms to test a worker's ability to go back on the job," he said.

Rehabilitation is important both to the patient and the business, he noted.

"The biggest cost to an employer is in lost work days. It's important to get employees healthy and back to work," said Duvendack. "By combining functions we avoid the communication breakdowns that sometimes occur between therapists and occupational health offices."

"One of our goals is to provide better customer service than anyone has ever seen - for all involved," he said.

The center's design was based on a lot of research, said Davis, who previously worked at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, as did Duvendack.

"Plans were customized based on what we heard from employees and employers. We did 18 months of research," Davis said.

The business location was also researched. The city's warehouse district provides an accessible location, said Duvendack.

"By being in the industrial core, we want to be close to our customers - not just in Peoria but in Pekin, East Peoria and Bartonville," said Duvendack, referring to other industrial centers in the

area. "This is an up-and-coming area of Peoria and right where we need to be.

" Despite ongoing construction on an atrium and new elevator at the facility, the center had patients scheduled the first week it was open, said Davis.

The office, which opened last week while construction continues both inside and outside the building, is the latest evidence of the renaissance movement going on in Peoria's warehouse district.

The Roszell/Sealtest building is being renovated by developers Pat Sullivan and John Hunt, who hope to attract other tenants along with the work injury center.

"We're refurbishing the building for offices, retail and condominiums. The work injury center takes up 6,000 of the 40,000 square feet the building offers. I wouldn't mind seeing a little grocery store or another restaurant," said Sullivan, who already owns Kelleher's, an Irish pub-restaurant on nearby Water Street.

