

# Clinic to provide preventive care to low-income women

■ A new wellness center in Overtown will offer free health screenings to women.

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Overtown will soon have a new healthcare clinic at which women and children can receive comprehensive screening — including Pap smears, sexually transmitted disease tests and blood counts.

The Lotus Wellness Center will be open Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings and will provide free services to 15 to 20 low-income women and children per week. It will be at the Lotus House Women's Shelter at 217 NW 15th St.

"We saw there was a great need to connect women to healthcare," said Dr. Kathryn Villano, a volunteer doctor who is helping launch the project.

Many women go to the doctor only if they are seriously ill and miss important screenings like Pap smears that can catch serious problems before they become life-threatening.

The center will initially provide services only to shelter clients, but will later expand to serve other low-income people.

The Sundari Foundation, which maintains the shelter, is supporting the project. The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida and the Health Foundation of South Florida are some of the organizations helping sponsor it.

"They targeted a very special need population: women and children who are homeless," said Susan Wildes, assistant director of the Blue Foundation, which donated \$100,000. "We are excited. Think about the women and children who will receive services and who wouldn't have



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**PROVIDING A NEEDED SERVICE:** University of Miami medical students Elishia McKay and Prabhat Mishra tour the newly opened Lotus House Wellness Center, whose shelter serves homeless women and children, on Wednesday in Overtown. UM medical students in the Department of Community Service and local doctors will provide the medical treatments and services to the uninsured and impoverished women who visit the clinic.

access to any healthcare."

With 10 volunteer doctors, the Lotus Center is starting an outreach campaign in the areas neighboring the shelter to find

potential patients. Organizers hope to expand services to more women in the future. Those who are diagnosed with a condition will be referred to other clinics

in the area.

"This is a proactive approach," Villano said. "We are actually going out to the community."