

CHASS Donation Newspaper Coverage

The Detroit Free Press 7-30

Ambassador Bridge firm to help pay for health center

BY ZLATI MEYER FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The company that owns the Ambassador Bridge has often been at odds with its neighbors in southwest [Detroit](#). But Thursday, the Detroit International Bridge Company extended an olive branch, donating more than \$200,000 to help open an expanded health center. The bridge company's contribution will be matched by more than \$561,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a new Community Health and [Social Services](#), or CHASS, center, the company said.

"The first time I went into the CHASS clinic, I was blown away," said Nora Moroun, wife of Ambassador Bridge owner Manuel (Matty) Moroun. "I couldn't believe what they were doing. I couldn't believe what they had to conquer. There were so many children, so many young mothers, so many seniors."

The planned 48,000-square-foot health center and administrative office will be built next to CHASS's current home on Fort, between Junction and Campbell, according to CHASS CEO Ricardo Guzman.

CHASS now serves about 14,000 uninsured and underinsured people. But the center plans to increase that number to about 25,000 clients, and triple the number of doctors, dentists, nurses and social workers.

"The need for the service is there," he said. "The Moroun family has come to our aid when we needed it."

The 40-year-old CHASS, which also has a center in Midtown, has all the necessary permits and plans to begin construction in 90 days, Guzman said. The nonprofit is in the process of securing loans and a federal loan guarantee from the government.

Some southwest Detroiters are mad about the Ambassador Bridge, blaming the international span for [truck](#) traffic, noise, congestion, high asthma rates and other health and quality-of-life issues. But Guzman said he saw no inconsistency in accepting money from the bridge owner to build a health facility, calling Nora Moroun the "Florence Nightingale of our center."

"We don't view it as a conflict, and I think if you talk to our clients on the street, they don't view it as a conflict," he said.

Nora Moroun interrupted to point out the money was pledged before the debate about the new span began.