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## GE awards \$1.25 million to local health care centers

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By Keila Torres

BRIDGEPORT -- Three health centers in the state will be awarded a total of \$1.25 million over the next two years as part of the General Electric Co. Foundation's Developing Health initiative.

Fairfield County is the 10th location awarded funds in GE's three-year, \$50 million initiative.

The program was kicked off in 2009 as a way to improve access to quality and affordable health care, according to [Beth Comstock](#), GE's senior vice president and chief marketing officer, who announced the grants Thursday at [Southwest Community Health Center's](#) Fairfield Avenue facility.

Southwest will receive \$250,000, which Chief Executive Officer [Kathy Yacavone](#) said would be used to provide women's services in additional locations and to extend the hours of the center's OB-GYN department.

Meanwhile, [Optimus Health Center Inc.](#) will receive \$500,000 to be split evenly between its offices in Bridgeport and Stamford, and [Community Health Care Inc.](#), which runs 12 health care centers throughout the state, will receive \$250,000 each for its facilities in Danbury and Norwalk.

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Comstock said she was surprised to learn that from 2008 to 2009 the number of uninsured individuals in Connecticut -- about 11 percent -- increased at twice the rate of the national average.

Previous grant recipients have been located in New Orleans, Houston and New York, among others.

As part of the program, each network of GE employees makes a commitment to helping an award recipient accomplish its goals of expanding access to health care.

All three health care systems agreed they could use help in streamlining operations and marketing. "How can we make an efficient, effective and elegant system?" said **Mark Masselli**, CHC's chief executive officer, who plans to hire additional clinical psychologists and psychiatrists in order to expand its mental and behavioral health services for children.

Ludwig Spinelli, chief executive officer of Optimus, said GE employees' skills in information technology would help the health care center complete its transition from paper records to electronic files.

Optimus plans to use the grant funds to try to reach pregnant women in the community who often times arrive at Optimus in their second and third trimesters, when minor issues have turned into more serious concerns.

Additional dental hygienists and nutritionists would also allow Optimus to teach this group the importance of dental hygiene and provide nutritional assistance to about 60 obese and diabetic children.

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