

In the Footsteps of Martin Luther King Jr.

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they would be willing to lend a hand. They were. They donated enough medical surplus supplies to get the clinic going. She also managed to snag a few grants and donations to keep it running.

hypertension or diabetes, or have lab work done.

The clinic, which has about 20 volunteer doctors, provides basic services that prevent a perfectly treatable condition, like diabetes, from turning into a costly trip to the emergency room,



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Pastor Mary Overstreet Smith opens the door to the North by Northeast Community Health Center, which she co-founded with Dr. Jill Ginsberg in 2006.

"They don't teach you how to do this in medical school," said Ginsberg of the leg-work needed to get a non-profit clinic up and running. "We sort of put one foot in front in foot of the other."

The first building that the clinic operated out of was humble annex next to Smith's church. It was so cramped that people had to wait outside to get treatment, and was down-right frigid in the colder months.

"It was never meant to be used that way," said Ginsberg of the building.

But the patients who relied on it were grateful to have prescriptions filled, get checkups on

said Ginsberg.

When Rita Moore lost her job working for an electrical equipment company, she began coming to the clinic to get her prescription for high blood pressure filled and to get treatment for acid reflux.

"I would be messed up," said Moore, if she didn't have the clinic. "I would be in the hospital right now."

Moore said the staff, although volunteers, genuinely care about her well-being, and have helped connect her with specialists.

Late last summer, the clinic moved into a new facility next door to the Garlington Center on

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— Dr. Jill Ginsberg

North Martin Luther King Jr. been newly refurbished. For the Boulevard. A fire had decimated 30 patients who rely on it, the building in 2007, and has facility is a big upgrade with a

cushy waiting room and new exam rooms.

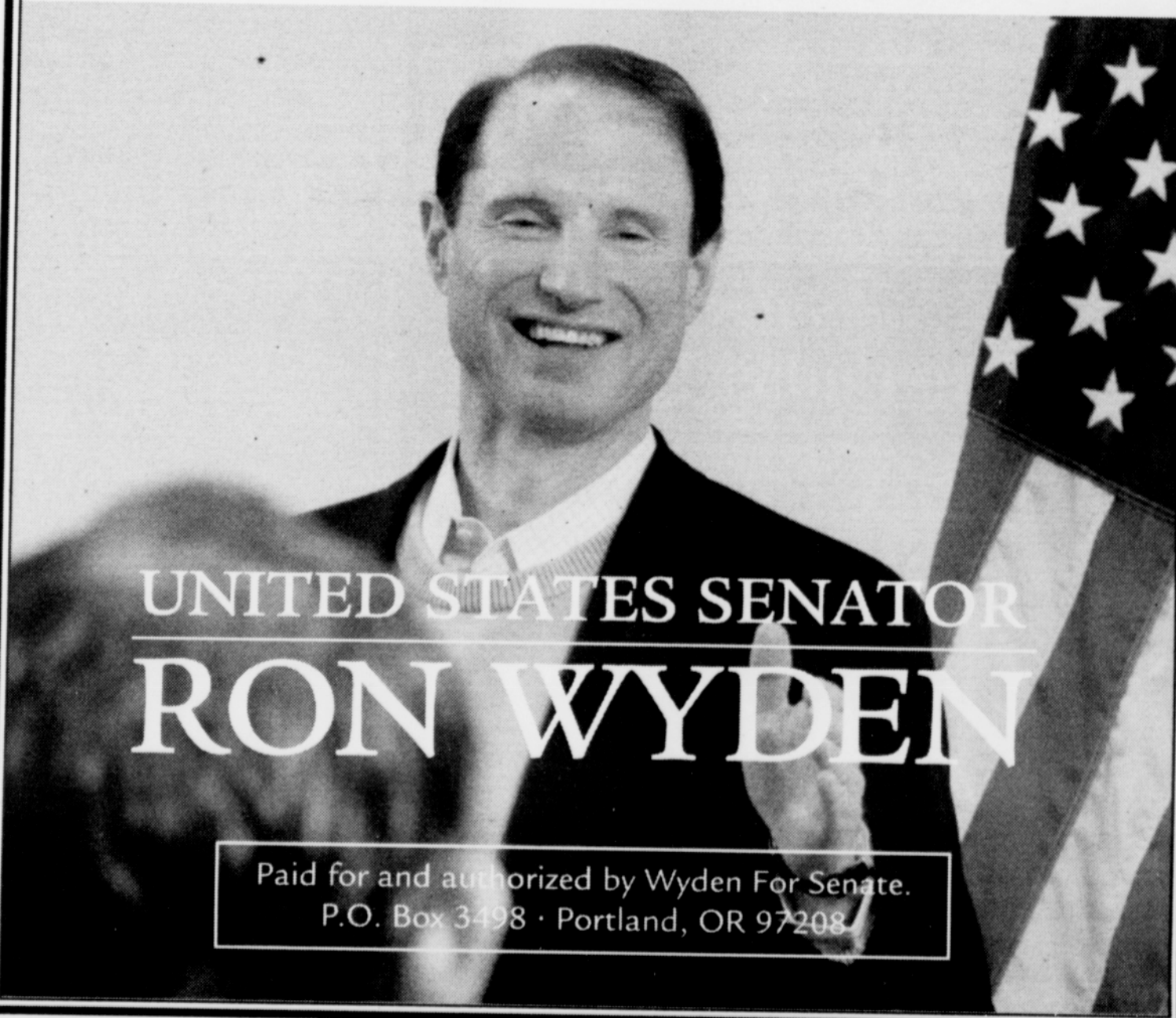
Looking back, Smith recalls Ginsberg giving her a quizzical look when she pitched the idea of opening a clinic after having just met her. But Smith said she had no reservations about making such an audacious proposal because she knew that if it was meant to be God would enlist her.

"I thought if I could do what I could do, someone else would do what they could do," said Smith.

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