

The Canticle

The newsletter of Santa Maria Urban Ministry, San Jose, CA June 2010

Medical Clinic Coming to SMUM After Much Planning, Preparation

Culminating months and months of discussion, preparation, and paperwork, SMUM is nearing approval for a state license to operate a free medical clinic, a Community Health Resource Center (CHRC). A long-planned project for SMUM, the CHRC will fill a significant need in the community by focusing on short-term medical issues. So far we have a physician, the needed medical equipment, and enough funding to get underway. So what's the delay? *We need a nurse.*

The **site charge nurse** needed for this clinic must meet the following criteria:

--Be a registered nurse with an active license, meeting all requirements for providing patient care:

--Provide noninvasive, urgent nursing care for SMUM clients:

--Spend four hours one day a week at the clinic, seeing clients in collaboration with the c physician:

--Provide referrals for more serious, specific needs:

--Assist in supervising other clinic staff during clinic hours: and

--Serve on a volunteer (i.e., unpaid) basis, at least initially.

If you meet these criteria or know someone who does and are interested in providing much-needed services to our clients, please contact Lawrence Robles at SMUM.

Adding a project of this type raises questions about SMUM's direction, priorities, and resources. Some of those questions and their answers are presented below.

Why is this clinic needed? Doesn't the downtown area around SMUM already have a free clinic? A free clinic *does* exist in SMUM's neighborhood, but it focuses on long-term illnesses and conditions. While this is a valuable service to the community, it means that individuals with less serious problems cannot be served because of the clinic's limited time and resources.

Why can't our clients use the county hospital?

Lacking access to medical clinics, many of our clients postpone visits to doctors until symptoms and conditions become severe. Then they go to the county hospital or other emergency rooms, where, because of overcrowding, they often have to wait for long periods of time before being examined. If their conditions could be diagnosed earlier, their illnesses could be less serious and treated more effectively, reducing suffering and recovery times.

Does SMUM have the space, equipment, and experience to operate such a clinic?

SMUM has a newly refurbished examining room, a waiting area, and all the needed equipment for the clinic, plus space for a dedicated computer for record keeping. SMUM operated the same type of clinic several years ago and was able to treat patients successfully without compromising services to other SMUM clients.

How will the clinic be funded?

SMUM has obtained health grants from several sources for this clinic and will apply for others. Contacts with funding agencies suggest that additional funding will be available. In addition, with state licensing, the CHRC will be authorized to bill Medical for services. The SMUM Board reviewed budgets and finance reports carefully before authorizing the application for the CHRC license.

Who will staff the CHRC besides the nurse?

A retired doctor has been working with SMUM to develop the application and has agreed to volunteer his services to the CHRC. Other staff will include translators, records controller, registrar, staff social worker, and volunteer coordinator.

How many hours per week will the CHRC be open?

Initially, the CHRC will be open only one morning per week—Wednesdays from 9 AM to noon. This is to provide time to get all staff in place and procedures worked out. As demand increases and resources permit, other days will gradually be added

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Health Clinic

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What can SMUM supporters do to help get the clinic operating? As already indicated, the most pressing initial need is gaining the commitment and services of a registered nurse so any recommendations or recruits would be extremely helpful. Another important way to help is to provide financial help to SMUM. As individuals visit the CHRC and become aware of SMUM's programs, more needs for food, clothing, and programs like ABC Playtime and STUDIO will probably become evident, increasing our client base and giving us additional opportunities to serve the community.

SMUM's Board of Directors is enthusiastic about the opportunities that the clinic provide and believe that the CHRC can play a major role in improving the health and well-being of people in our area.

If you have questions about the CHRC and would like to be involved in it, please contact Lawrence Robles by phone at (408) 292-3314 or e-mail at smum83@gmail.com.

Project Backpack Underway

Thinking ahead to the beginning of the new school year in August, SMUM has started its annual backpack project. This year, with a good supply of school materials on hand, contributions are solicited for *backpacks*.

As Lawrence Robles explained, "Our effort usually focuses upon getting EVERY child or youth a backpack. The backpack is what costs the most, so it is more difficult for our clients to provide. As far as other items, we typically have sufficient supplies. Also, parents and families can usually afford the particular school supplies for their children, but they really need help obtaining a quality backpack."

Rev. Robles also cautions, because SMUM receives both red and blue backpacks every year, that absolutely NO RED or BLUE SUPPLIES are

distributed to kids in our community. Some school principals and assistant principals confiscate any folders, notebooks, pencil boxes, and even backpacks or other items in these colors to avoid any association with gang colors.

If you can help, encourage members of your church or organization to contribute backpacks. You can also organize "Backpack Stuffing Parties" at SMUM. The school supplies are organized for easy assembly, and the schedule is wide open for such parties. It's a good opportunity for fun and fellowship while doing a good deed. Contact Lawrence Robles for more information.

Great Trips for STUDIO Kids Over the Summer Months

During the school year, students in our STUDIO program come to SMUM after school to work on their homework and to use the computer lab—the priority is schoolwork. During the summer, however, the priority is having fun, and this year the STUDIO kids will enjoy three field trips.

On Saturday, June 26, the students and adult volunteers spent the day at the beach in Pacific Grove.



STUDIO students with accompanying adults in Pacific Grove. Images Copyright 20109 by Katy Dickinson and John Plocher.

On Saturday, July 17, the group will go to Gilroy Gardens for the day, and on Saturday, August 28, they will go to Raging Waters for one last carefree day at summer's end.

Generous Donation Gives SMUM A New Roof

The days of leaks through the ceiling at Santa Maria are over, thanks to a generous donation from the Leonard Foundation. Mark Leonard made the contribution to cover all costs associated with installing the roof and making any needed repairs to pass the city inspection. Work began during the week of June 20, when the old roof was torn off.



A worker from Shelton Roofers helps remove the old roof at Santa Maria.

Santa Maria remained open during the work, since the trucks and other equipment took up only three spaces in the parking lot. With the new roof and the exterior paint provided by the earlier ACE Hardware grant, the building is more attractive and more weatherproof. Many thanks to the Leonard Foundation for their generosity.

Community Wheels Helps SMUM Clients Get Rolling

“I had a bike when I was a kid—it was the greatest thing in the world.” So says Michael Hendricks of Community Wheels, the non-profit organization that he and his wife Jennifer founded and maintain.

Community Wheels sets up shop at SMUM on the second Saturday of the month, doing bicycle repairs and re-building bicycles for SMUM clients. They accept donations of old bicycles and refurbish them for distribution.

Hendricks, a member of Central Christian Church, remembers going to Oakland with a youth minister to see a similar operation. He states that the smile on the faces of the children who received bicycles was all of the motivation he needed to start the program at SMUM.

He sees two major benefits in the program. The first is for adults who do not have cars or money for transportation to get to work. The second is for youth and children who get a different perspective of the world by riding a bike. Think of bicycles as rideable art that can just about save the world.



Happy kids receive new bicycles, thanks to Community Wheels.

Community Wheels has been present at SMUM for three Saturdays (9 am-noon). In that time they have been able to provide thirty bicycles and have done a number of repairs (e.g., replace tires, tubes, cables, and brake pads)

You Can Help, Too

Do you have an unused bicycle in your garage or basement? If so, please bring it to SMUM. If it can be repaired and made operable, Community Wheels will turn it into a means of transportation for one of our clients.

SMUM's Administrative Assistant Fills Important Role at SMUM

Last November, Luis Alfonso Mendez was appointed Administrative Assistant at SMUM. While the Board of Directors had discussed getting assistance for Reverend Lawrence Robles, SMUM's executive director, his appointment to be Priest in Charge at Nuestra Sra. de Guadalupe, made the decision a necessity, as Rev. Robles would be away from SMUM for one day a week.



Mendez was born in Bogota, Columbia, the youngest of five children. He states, "My mother and father taught us all honesty, humbleness, to be simple with needs, to help others, and most importantly, to love God."

Mendez received a degree in agricultural engineering and worked for several companies. His last job in Columbia was working for the government trying to convince farmers to substitute legal crops, such as rice and corn, for illicit crops, particularly cocaine. After two years in this job, he became a target for those in the cocaine business. As a result he moved to San Jose in 2000.

Shortly after his arrival in San Jose, Mendez and his family became clients of SMUM. He states, "SMUM helped us with food, clothing, and friendship through Lawrence and Carmen" (Robles). For eight years, he worked as a volunteer at the front desk and in the warehouse, preparing food boxes for clients.

Now he is employed part time as an Administrative Assistant at SMUM, where he is known to everyone as Alfonso. Among his duties are keeping client files up to date, compiling statistics for the food bank, preparing reports on emergency food boxes issued, maintaining the cold storage archive and a donation archive, and recording volunteer hours. Alfonso is playing a vital role in maintaining accurate and timely records and is certainly living the teachings of his parents as he works at SMUM.

Be a Friend to SMUM

Aristotle said, "Friendship is essentially a partnership." For a number of years, SMUM has asked individuals and churches to join in partnership to help the community through the "Friends Program."

Friends are those who donate at least ten dollars or more each month (\$120 a year) to SMUM to help with the overhead and programs of the Ministry.

While many individuals contribute, for which we are thankful, only 143 are counted as Friends. Income from the Friends program has doubled over the past years, according to Joanna Shreve, SMUM's Treasurer. Being a Friend has an added benefit, according to Shreve. The more people we have listed as regular contributors, the better the picture painted for funding agencies as we apply for grants.

There is a Jewish saying, "Who finds a faithful friend finds a treasure," so thanks to all who are our treasures. It is hoped that those who are not will be moved to use the envelope enclosed with this Canticle to join the program.

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