

CARE Center is a model for low-income families

Caring for thousands of kids each year through a variety of medical services became too much for the former San Marcos Care Center.



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Having outgrown its cramped quarters during the past 16 years at San Marcos Elementary School, the facility has now opened a more fitting, 8,800-square-foot, free-standing building at Galveston Elementary School. It also carries a new name: The Chandler

CARE Center.

The center provides free medical treatment to more than 1,300 uninsured poverty-level children in Chandler. With the new LEED-certified facility, administrators expect that number to at least double.

What makes this operation so special is that many medical, dental, counseling and service organizations donate professional time at the Chandler

About the facility

The CARE Center's target population is uninsured children from families with little or no income who live anywhere in the city of Chandler. In 15 years, the center has provided medical assistance and immunizations to more than 51,000 uninsured youths in need.

Contact the center, 777 E. Galveston St., at 480-812-7900.

CARE Center, so there is no charge to any child, family or the school district for services. Volunteer organizations include private practitioners as well as staff from larger entities such as Cigna and Banner Health.

In fact, out-of-pocket expenses for the center are just 22 percent of its actual operating budget, as virtually all professional services are donated.

Free vouchers for needed medications, medical lab tests and medical imaging are provided in part by funds

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from Chandler's Housing and Human Services Commission and donations from Chandler Unified School District employees. To help the children's clinic leverage this funding, several local businesses provide services at 25 percent to 70 percent off their customary prices.

Catholic Healthcare West provides free fluoride-varnish treatments, dental cleanings and X-rays, while volunteer dentists provide restorative services.

The center also provides a weekly immunization clinic at no charge in partnership with Catholic Healthcare West and the Chandler Fire Department.

But the center goes well beyond health care. More than 7,000 needy Chandler residents receive food, clothing, and/or household items there. The Chandler Public Library staff distributes free books in English or Spanish to children in the clinic, while taking the opportunity to register parents for

library cards.

The city provided \$500,000 toward the construction of the new building.

The center's administrator, Dr. Susan Horan, could fill volumes with her stories of the help local families have received. For most, it is their only option for care, and there are many tales of kids showing no fear in sometimes dire or even bizarre circumstances because of the friendly surroundings of the center and its dedicated and caring staff.

The Chandler CARE Center has a long history of successfully providing the health-care and social services that uninsured, poverty-level children need to enter and succeed in school. With its new center built firmly upon a foundation of public support, the center will continue as a model for improving the health, well-being and educational achievement of needy youth and parents in Chandler.

Jack Sellers is a Chandler City Council member.