

Mobile clinic to serve kids with special needs



This mobile clinic, recently donated to Chiricahua Community Health Centers, offers medical services to children in underserved areas of Cochise County. (Photo courtesy of Rebecca Hut)

By Dana Cole
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DOUGLAS — Children in Cochise County’s medically underserved regions will be receiving improved access to health care.

A new 40-foot mobile clinic, complete with waiting area, lab, two exam rooms, restroom, nurse’s station and wheelchair lift, has been donated to Chiricahua Community Health Centers, Inc. (CCHCI) through a partnership with Children’s Health Fund, a national organization that advocates for and develops primary health programs for disadvantaged and medically underserved children.

“Children’s Health Fund and CCHCI have formed a partnership to create Southern Arizona Children’s Health Project, which will improve access to health care for our underserved children and families,” said Jennifer “Ginger” Ryan, founder and chief executive officer of CCHCI. “Funding for this unit comes through American Idol, from its ‘Idol Gives Back’ program, where Children’s Health Fund selects two or three different charities they wish to support.”

Children with a whole range of special health care needs are served by the project, Ryan said. Some of those diagnoses include cerebral palsy, mental retardation, autism, seizure disorders and speech and developmental disorders.

The project marks the first pediatric mobile medical program to focus on children and their families in Southeastern Cochise County, which has been designated as “a health professional shortage area” by the federal government, Ryan said.

The mobile unit will be featured during a day-long community celebration on Saturday at CCHCI’s Jennifer Ginger Ryan Clinic, located at 1100 F. Ave., in Douglas, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be activities for the entire family, kicking off with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. with comments from Dr. Irwin Redlener, president and co-founder of Children’s Health Fund, along with Ryan. Members of the community are invited to tour the new mobile unit, enjoy free food and drinks, listen to Mariachi music and participate in chances to win gifts and raffle prizes. There will be three jumping castles for the kids, along with 10 piñatas and folklore dancers.

Services for the children’s health project are provided through the infrastructure of CCHCI’s community health center model, which includes fixed clinical sites, mobile medical and dental services, community outreach and innovative prevention programs.

The new mobile clinic arrived in Douglas on Monday and is currently parked at CCHCI’s clinic.

“It’s absolutely amazing,” said Jill Japan, CCHCI’s pediatric clinical core coordinator.

This latest mobile addition joins CCHCI’s two other mobile units, both much smaller than their new counterpart. The new medical unit will bring top quality pediatric care to children, regardless of the family’s ability to pay, Ryan added. Along with Lee-Melk, CCHCI has two other pediatricians on its staff, Stephen Lindstrom and April Alvarez-Corona.

“We (CCHCI) became a network member of Children’s Health Fund more than a year ago,” Ryan said.

In addition to the new mobile medical unit, Children’s Health Fund paid for an innovative Pediatric Therapy Playroom for children with special health care needs, which is already in place at CCHCI’s clinic in Douglas.

The therapy playroom, consists of a safe, indoor play area with equipment that addresses the developmental and therapy needs for these special children.

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