

# Community health centers are recognized this week

"America's Health Centers: Making Community Initiative and Enterprise Work" is the theme of Community Health Center Week which is being observed this week.

Community health care centers are recognized for the health services they provide to more than 9 million people living in medically underserved rural and urban communities across the country.

Golden Valley Health Center, which serves the Patterson area, has been a community health center since 1977. The center, located at 200 C St., is one of more than 850 community based centers which provide care through 2400 sites throughout California, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

Founded in 1972 as a private nonprofit corporation, Golden

Valley Centers provide primary medical and dental care, lab, X-ray, pharmacy, translations, and health education. There are health care centers in Patterson, Westley, Modesto, Turlock Gustine-Newman, Merced, Placerville, Le Grand, Dos Palos, and Los Banos. More than 45,000 people on 156,000 visits are served each year.

"Our health centers are locally owned and operated businesses," says Michael Sullivan, CEO of Golden Valley Health Centers. "Reports show that health centers provide care in a highly cost-effective fashion, including lower hospital admission rates, less inappropriate use of emergency room services, higher childhood immunization rates, and better use of preventative health services resulting in lower rates of preventable illness."

## Garden Club to open fall season Thursday

The first fall meeting of the Patterson Garden Club will be Thursday, Sept. 26, at the Las Palmas Mobile Estates Clubhouse, 250 E. Las Palmas Ave.

personal enhancement may join the Patterson Garden Club. Dues are \$5 per year. Meetings are the fourth Thursday of each month.

... always welcome

# A week for community health centers

Community, migrant and homeless health care centers will be recognized through Saturday during Community Health Center Week for the vital health services they provide to more than 9 million people living in medically underserved rural and urban communities across the country. Golden Valley Health Centers in Merced has been a community health center since 1972.

This year's theme – "America's Health Centers: Making Community Initiative and Enterprise Work" – will focus on the nation's health center network as the best and most cost efficient approach to ensuring that America's urgent health needs in medically underserved communities are met.

Golden Valley Health Center, which serves residents of the Merced area, is one of over 850 community based health centers that provide care through 2,400 delivery sites in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Guam. For the past 30 years, these frontline providers have demonstrated that they serve the national interest. Their successful and innovative programs in

primary and preventive care have produced the markers showing the way to accessible, low-cost community based health care.

Community Health Center Week is of special significance as this nation aggressively pursues greater cost savings in government and moves to shift responsibilities for health care and other domestic programs to the states and private sectors. Today's health centers are offering this nation a choice – tested programs that meet the criteria of accountability, quality, efficiency, and taxpayer savings demanded by the American public.

"Our health centers are locally owned and operated businesses," says Michael Sullivan, chief executive officer of Golden

Valley Health Centers. "They have shown that this nation can effectively control costs while meeting the health needs of more Americans. We absolutely need to keep what works and what delivers significant returns on public and private investment."

Sullivan says, "Reports show that health centers provide care in a highly cost-effective fashion, including lower hospital admission rates, less inappropriate use of emergency room services, higher childhood immunization rates, and better use of preventive health services resulting in lowered rates of preventable illness."

Sullivan says America's health centers and Golden Valley Health Centers are public/private partnership helping build

stronger and healthier communities. "They are invaluable community assets – improving health, providing jobs, strengthening schools, stabilizing neighborhoods – and, importantly, encouraging individual responsibility for health. All Americans benefit from their service and commitment to the medically underserved."

For information, contact Golden Valley Health Center at 383-1848 in Merced.

## Health workers break down cultural barriers

**Mission:** The mission of Golden Valley Health Centers is to improve the health status of its patients by providing quality, managed primary health care services to people in the communities they serve regardless of language, financial or cultural barriers.

- ✓ Founded in 1972 as private non-profit corporation.
- ✓ Board members - 15 (9 consumers, 6 professionals).

**Services:** Primary medical and dental care; lab, X-ray pharmacy, transiation, health education.

**Center locations:** 13 – Merced, Planada, Le Grand, Dos Palos, Los Banos, Gustine-Newman, Turlock, Patterson, Westley, Modesto (4).

✓ **Employees:** 250, 26 physicians, 16 physician assistants/nurse practitioners 8 dentists.

**Budget:** \$15,439,241.

**Revenue sources:** Medi-Cal, 60 percent; Medicare, 7 percent; sliding fee, 10 percent; private insurance, 8 percent; grants, 15 percent.

**Client data:** users, 45,000; visits, 156,000; Ethnicity: Hispanic, 67 percent; white, 17 percent; Southeast Asians, 8 percent; black, 5 percent.

**Special populations:** Golden Valley Health Centers pays special attention to three special population groups: migrant and seasonal farmworkers, homeless persons, Southeast Asian refugees.

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## Westside health organization promotes Community Health Center awareness

This is Community Health Center Week, Sept. 16-21, and the Los Banos unit of Golden Valley Health Centers is joining other Golden Valley units to remind area residents of what it is they do in the community.

In addition to Los Banos, Golden Valley has centers in Dos Palos, Gustine, Newman and Patterson on the Westside. Other centers are located in LeGrand, Merced, Modesto, Planada and Turlock.

Michael O. Sullivan, CEO for the group, took the week's recognition as an opportunity to remind area residents of the organization's purpose, to serve medically underserved areas - rural and urban areas with few or no health care providers and with a substantial number of low income and uninsured people.

"The underlying goal of the community health center has been to help communities and

their people take responsibility for their health," said Sullivan. "Health centers fill a critical void, providing care for those whom other providers are unable to serve, including low income and uninsured working families."

The administrator said that health centers such as the ones in Los Banos and Dos Palos offer both primary and preventive health services. But he notes that it doesn't stop there. Most health centers also offer health education, provide community outreach, aid with transportation to care and provide translation services, depending upon the particular needs of a community.

"While health center services are not free," Sullivan states, "no one is turned away because of inability to pay. Patients are charged on a sliding fee scale to ensure that income or lack of insurance cov-

erage is not a barrier to care."

Sullivan said that Golden Valley Health Centers make a difference in communities by providing cost-effective, high-quality health care. "Studies demonstrate that total health care costs for health center patients are on average lower than other providers serving the same population," he said.

He also made these points:

- Health centers bring health care providers, services and facilities to communities often not served by others.

- Health centers offer comprehensive one-stop primary and preventive health care.

- The centers are held to strict, uniform national standards.

- Communities are challenged by health centers to meet their local health needs.

- Health centers provide cost-effective prenatal care, reducing adverse effects.