

# Health care for everyone

Golden Valley Health Centers is pleased to be a part of America's Community Health Center Week - Sept. 16 - 21.

Since our inception in 1972, Golden Valley Health Centers has provided high quality, comprehensive primary and preventive health services to the medically under-served of Merced and Stanislaus counties.

The underlying goal of the community health center has been to help communities and their people take responsibility for their health.

Health centers fill a critical void, providing care for those whom other providers are unable to serve, including low income and uninsured working families as well as vulnerable and high-risk populations, such as pregnant women, homeless persons, farmworkers, people with disabilities, the frail elderly, and others.

They are staffed with interdisciplinary teams of physicians, nurses, dentists, and other health professionals, and are linked with other providers for their patients' specialty and inpatient care needs.

By law, health centers serve medically under-served areas - rural and urban communities with few or no health care providers and with substantial numbers of low income and uninsured people.

In addition to primary and preventive health services, most health centers offer health education-promotion, community outreach, transportation to care, and translation services, depending on the health needs of their communities.

While health center services are not free, 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 coverage is not a barrier to care.

Medicare and Medi-Cal as well as private insurance are billed for those with coverage.

Golden Valley Health Centers are linked to the communities we serve.

They work with other public and private health services to coordinate resources for effective patient care.

Most health centers are involved in managed care, having contracted with health plans which recognize their cost-effectiveness and their unique skills and competence.

Golden Valley Health Centers make a difference in many ways:

**Cost effectiveness** - Health centers provide 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 populations.

While health center visits may be more costly than other settings because of the comprehensive package of preventive and primary care services they offer, the centers achieve significant overall savings by reducing the need for hospital admissions and costly emergency care.

## Michael Sullivan

**Improving access** - Health centers bring health care providers, services and facilities to people and communities often not served by other providers.

They have successfully recruited, trained, and retained health professionals in shortage areas.

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

Ninety-eight percent of health center physicians are board certified/eligible.

Numerous independent studies document that health centers improve the health of their communities and provide cost-effective care reducing preventable deaths, costly disability, and communicable disease.

**Accountability** - Health centers are held to and meet strict, uniform high national standards of accountability under the Public Health Service Act.

They deliver both performance and results. They demonstrate that the nation can effectively control costs while providing top quality health care to more Americans.

**Empowerment** - Health centers challenge communities to take charge in developing innovative programs to meet special community health needs.

Not only do they engage strong citizen participation, they build service capacity and attract other investment.

**Enhancing opportunity** - Health centers contribute to the strength and well being of their communities.

By providing cost-effective prenatal care, health centers reduce the high costs associated with adverse pregnant outcomes.

By keeping children healthy, health centers enable them to stay in school and train for the future as responsible members of the community.

By keeping workers healthy, health centers reduce absenteeism and help workers remain productive and contributing citizens.

**Investment** - Health centers represent federal, state, and local investment in primary care infrastructure that yields a substantial return.

Health centers are invaluable community assets - improving health, providing jobs, strengthening schools, stabilizing neighborhoods, and enhancing community pride.

Health centers have produced the markers showing the way to an effective alternative in accessible, low-cost, community-based health care for more Americans.

They are essential components of health care delivery - helping this nation control costs even while it meets growing health needs.

*Michael O. Sullivan is chief executive officer for Golden Valley Health Centers in Merced and Stanislaus counties.*

(continued from page 11) project. "We're looking at a cost of about \$800,000 and we've raised about \$100,000 to date."

"AARP, Merced Social Club and Merced Seniors, Inc. have several things going. Twice a month we recycle. Sometimes there are cars 20 deep with seniors bringing in plastics, cans and other recyclable materials. We rent out the building. We sell shirts and badges, and have plaques available for memori-

al planters. We've had a garage sale and a Christmas money tree, and Betty Stewart had a quilt sale."

Riggs said the seniors were asking the Merced City Council to match what the seniors raise on a two-to-one basis.

"It's worth putting in a second phase," Riggs said of the senior center. "It will be a locally-owned building that can bring in about a third more income by us being able to rent more space."

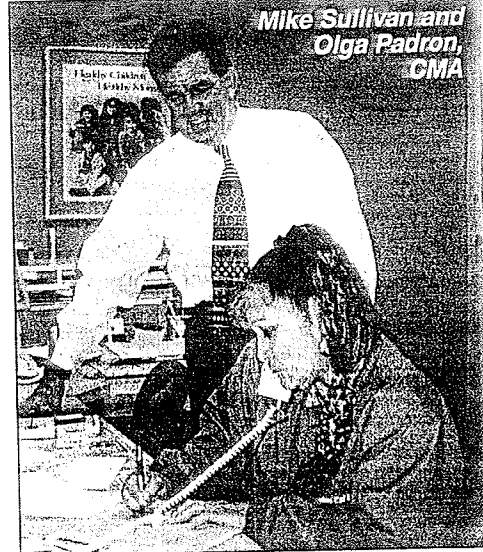
## Golden Valley Health Center serves less fortunate

By SUZANNE MILES  
Golden Valley Health Center is a little different from most health care providers.

For while it has some privately-insured clients, GVHC focuses on migrant and seasonal farm workers, homeless persons and Southeast Asian refugees - generally, people with low incomes and little or no insurance.

A private non-profit corporation, it provides family health, maternity, dental and urgent care, x-ray, pharmacy, health education and laboratory services in well-equipped, attractively decorated clinics.

GVHC is headquartered on Childs Avenue, Merced, and has branch clinics in Planada, Le Grand, Dos Palos, Los Banos, Gustine-



Mike Sullivan and Olga Padron, CMA

Newman, Turlock, Patterson, Westley, and Modesto. The 250 - member staff includes 26 physicians, 16 physician assistants/nurse practitioners and eight dentists.

Chief Executive Officer Mike Sullivan said the organization's mission is to provide quality managed primary health care service to residents in the communities

we serve regardless of language, financial or cultural barriers.

"Our doors are open to everyone," Sullivan stated.

Sullivan himself is not a typical CEO. He has a social sciences background and spent two years in the Peace Corps after receiving a Masters degree in public health care. He reports to the nine consumers and six health care professionals who comprise the GVHC board of directors.

"I guess our program really goes back to the Sixties and Seventies, when there was a determination that migrant and seasonal farm workers had tremendous unmet health needs in this country," Sullivan said.

"It was brought to the attention of the public by (broadcast journalist) Edward R. Murrow. He made a documentary, 'Harvest of Shame,' which was a pretty sad commentary on how transient people that pick grapes and other table food had few rights. This situation led to government intervention and the Federal National Migrant Health program. Merced County became involved as one of many counties in the U.S. that had farm workers with unmet health needs."

Sullivan was hired in 1972 to direct and develop a coordinated migrant health program. The program was administered by Merced County before GVHC became independent.

Revenue sources for the center include Medi-Cal, Medicare, private insurance, sliding fees and grants.

"I've always felt that people, regardless of their economic condition, deserve first class health care," Sullivan said. "At Golden Valley we have the same good buildings, equipment and care that anyone else would expect. The fact that we have some private-pay patients attests, I think, that we are providing quality care."

"We don't have to be concerned about stockholders," Sullivan said. "Our focus is on our patients."

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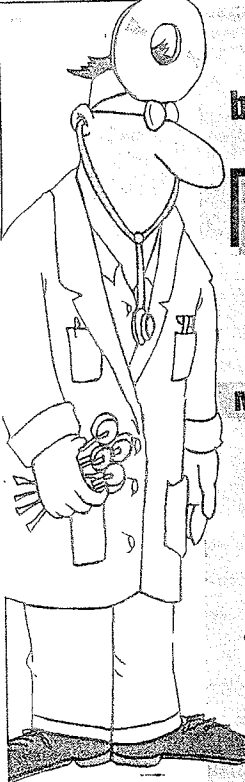
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