

MOM needs helping hand to keep rolling

Roving health clinic getting back on track, but lacks full funding

By MICHAEL MELLO
BEE STAFF WRITER

MOM had to go away for a while, but she's coming home soon.

MOM is the common name for the Medical Outreach Mobile, a clinic on wheels. It roves Stanislaus County serving people — such as expectant mothers — who otherwise couldn't get to medical care.

The Waterford Soroptimist Club started the program in 1993 as a way to get prenatal care to women in rural areas. It came to a halt in December, when the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency had to slash funding for some clinics.

Last week, the Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission unanimously ratified a contract with Doctors Medical Center Foundation to bring the roving clinic back, under the



The Medical Outreach Mobile makes a 2000 visit to Orville Wright School in Modesto, allowing Elida Rivas to receive prenatal care.

THE BEE

operation of the Golden Valley Health Center.

The commission's action provides \$145,880 for the MOMobile, about half of what the program needs to operate for the next 16 months. The commission, established by Proposition 10 in 1998, decides how to spend tobacco tax money for programs that benefit parents and children younger than 5.

"Here was what we saw was a valuable service," said Dr. John Walker, the commission's chairman and Stanislaus County's public health officer.

In a poverty-stricken area such as this one, "the uninsured and underinsured are a significant issue," Walker said, adding that regular health care is critical, especially for young children and pregnant women.

"For every dollar spent on prevention, you save \$6 on treatment," treatment that often is given in the county's crowded emergency rooms, Walker said. "Here is an opportunity to intervene. It's a double-win for everyone."

Now the Doctors Medical Center Foundation, which is

charged with MOM's upkeep, is working to fill the gaps in MOM's funding. The organization has received donations of several thousand dollars from the Bright Family Foundation and the Modesto and North Modesto Soroptimist clubs. But it can use a lot more, said Steve Spriggs, DMC Foundation's executive director.

"We're looking to the community to step up and help us out." The mobile clinic is receiving a \$12,000 face-lift, including new upholstery, and should be roaming the county again soon.

MOM started out as a prenatal care center, but has since grown to include most medical services, including baby checks, immunization and first aid, Spriggs said.

"We don't turn anybody away for services. We will get them into the system one way or another," Spriggs said.

To donate to the MOM program, call the Doctors Medical Center Foundation, 527-3412.

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Around the Region

STANISLAUS COUNTY

MOM MOBILE CEREMONY: A rededication ceremony is planned Thursday for MOM, the Maternity Outreach Mobile that is back on the road, serving Stanislaus County residents — such as expectant mothers — who otherwise could not get to medical care. The Waterford Soroptimist Club started the program in 1993, but a lack of funding grounded it last year. In February, the county Children and Families Commission unanimously ratified a contract with the Doctors Medical Center Foundation to bring the roving clinic back, under the operation of Golden Valley Health Center, and it has returned to operation. The rededication event is set to run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Golden Valley Health Center, 1114 Sixth St., Modesto. The event is free and open to the public.



The Modesto Bee

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MOM is nearly back on her wheels. The Medical Outreach Mobile had been the only contact with health-care professionals for some of Stanislaus County's poorest kids and pregnant women. MOM was knocked off the road in December when county funding ran out. Doctors Medical Center Foundation and Golden Valley Health Centers rode to the rescue with continued staffing, but money was needed to pay for maintenance, gas, etc. On Tuesday, the Stanislaus County Children and Families Commission coughed up \$145,680 — enough to get the giant RV over the last hurdle. The money comes from special fees placed on the sale of tobacco products. MOM resumes her visits next month.