



ANDERSON FREE CLINIC

~SERVING ANDERSON COUNTY, SC SINCE 1984~

Contact:
Barb Baptista, Executive Director
Anderson Free Clinic
864-226-1294, Ext. 222
Barb.Baptista@anmedhealth.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anderson Free Clinic Seeks Help to Avoid Cutting Services

Anderson, SC – July 29, 2010 – The Anderson Free Clinic will be changing its hours in order to reduce costs. To avoid cutting services, Free Clinic leaders hope that more volunteer health care professionals will donate their time and expertise to help the clinic continue to provide desperately needed medical, dental, and pharmacy services.

Free Clinic patients are uninsured, and their household income falls below the Federal Poverty Level, in some cases far below the FPL. Many patients who currently qualify for Free Clinic services did not qualify a year ago because they had jobs that provided both a higher level of income and insurance benefits. **There are now more people than ever who need the Free Clinic's medical, dental, and pharmacy services.**

What makes this a more significant and heartbreaking situation is the fact that contributions and grants to the Free Clinic have decreased over the past two years. Economic conditions in the Anderson community have made it difficult for long-time supporters, even local foundations, to give at previous levels, so the Anderson Free Clinic is facing significant financial challenges. A few measures have been taken to help generate income, and other steps, such as decreasing staff hours, have been taken to decrease expenditures.

“In trying to operate efficiently, making the best use of our staff, volunteers, and overall resources, we had to make changes to our operating hours,” stated Barb Baptista, Anderson Free Clinic Executive Director.

The entire Free Clinic will close on Mondays, and the Tuesday/Thursday schedule will include new evening hours on Tuesdays. Kathie Jones, RN, Free Clinic Nurse Manager, explained that with the changes and the incorporation of evening hours, the Free Clinic is actually increasing the hours it is open for patients. “Our success will be greatly dependent on the availability of doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and nurses to help during the 26 hours per week – plus the once a month Saturday clinics – when medical providers can see patients,” she said.

In addition, the AFC Pharmacy's hours will be reduced unless volunteer pharmacists can be found to make up the hours. Barb Baptista noted: “If we cannot get volunteers to cover the staff hours we have to cut, we will need to reduce the volume of prescriptions we fill. A lot of people will go without pharmacy services at the Free Clinic and in this community. What really hurts is that we at the clinic know most patients have no other means to get their medication. Some will buy only what they can afford and that would mean that they are taking their medications every other day, half the dosage daily, or not at all.”



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The AFC Dental Clinic's hours will be changed as well. That program is at capacity, has a waiting list, and needs professional volunteers to help fill in the gaps. "The importance of dental health cannot be denied," said Dr. Robert G. Austin, who founded the Dental Clinic in 1992. "In fact, scientists are finding more and more links between oral health and conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, pre-term labor, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, and even certain types of cancers." The Dental Clinic will be open Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings.

The Anderson Free Clinic has been in difficult situations before, and each time the right people have stepped forward to help, either by volunteering, contributing financially ... or both. "When the right people come together, and because every effort or contribution counts, extraordinary things can happen. I know that will hold true this time again for AFC. I thank in advance all existing and new supporters of the Free Clinic," stated Dr. Harold Morse. Dr. Morse, who helped found the Free Clinic nearly 26 years ago, still faithfully volunteers on a monthly basis at the clinic.

Health care professionals who would like to volunteer their time are asked to contact Barb Baptista at (864) 226-1294, ext. 222 or Barb.Baptista@anmedhealth.org. To make a financial contribution, go to Anderson Free Clinic website or mail a check to Anderson Free Clinic, PO Box 728, Anderson, SC 29622.

About the Anderson Free Clinic

The Anderson Free Clinic, one of South Carolina's first comprehensive free health care clinics, was founded on the belief that high-quality health care is the right of all individuals. Since December of 1984, the Anderson Free Clinic has provided medical care to residents of Anderson County who cannot afford private services.

Since its founding, the Free Clinic has grown substantially. Originally open only half a day per week with one paid employee, the Free Clinic is now a full-time operation, open five or six days per week. Over the past 26 years, the Free Clinic has expanded its services to include specialty clinics, dental clinics, and pharmacy services as well as general medical visits. The Anderson Free Clinic also operates a satellite clinic in Honea Path, which is open 4 days per month.

As a non-profit organization, the Free Clinic relies on grants from the United Way and private foundations as well as contributions from individuals and businesses to make up more than 70% of its budget. The clinic is not a federal- or state-funded program.

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