
Grand Junction's Marillac Clinic celebrates 20 years

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GRAND JUNCTION CO, COLORADO,

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. — Without Marillac Clinic, Venieca Hanes figured she'd be dead by now.

The 51-year-old woman moved to Grand Junction two years ago, severely depressed and without insurance.

"I was under so much heartache and depression," Hanes said, and, hearing about the Grand Junction clinic that caters to low-income residents, she made an appointment at Marillac. "And they've been helping me ever since."

Hanes described Marillac Clinic as a happy place.

"The atmosphere is so jolly. The doctors, the therapists, the counselors, they're all great," Hanes said. "They're there to help you."

Thursday, at an open house, the clinic celebrated 20 years of helping people in the Grand Valley.

For decades, Marillac has helped low-income people and families who do not have health insurance.

With the economy trembling, that number has increased of late, said Marillac Executive Director Steve Hurd, Ph.D.

"With our economy now, and an increasing number of people finding health insurance being unaffordable, it's going to result in more and more people being uninsured in our community," Hurd said. "We're already seeing that."

The rapid increase in the costs for health care and insurance has priced out many people and families who traditionally had insurance, Hurd said. Further, insurance premiums have increased so significantly, employers are passing along a larger percentage for employees to pay.

At Marillac Clinic, eligibility starts when someone's income reaches 250 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$26,000 for a single person and \$56,000 for a family of four.

All patients pay for their services, on a sliding scale that's based on income.

What concerns Hurd most are the people who make too much money to meet the income requirements, but who can't afford insurance.



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“Our concern as a clinic – how can our community respond to the people in need?” Hurd said. “If we don’t provide intervention ... those problems get ignored, and they end up in the emergency room.” And then the family potentially loses a contributing member, he added.

“When you consider health care versus food and housing, obviously food and housing have got to come first,” said Dr. Amy Davis, clinic medical director.

Patients come from all walks of life.

“It’s not just for folks who are homeless,” she said. She sees patients of various education levels who work in various professions and trades.

Marillac physicians have seen 3,991 individual patients through Oct. 31. That compares with 3,900 in the first ten months of last year, “but that was 1,000 more than the year before,” said Susie Tucker, grant analyst and statistician for the clinic.

The clinic sees an average of 200 to 250 new, unduplicated clients every month, she said.

For fiscal year 1999-2000, the clinic saw 2,786 individual patients. That number has grown to 4,231 last year, Tucker said. Dental numbers compare at 4,602 in 1999-2000 to 4,647 last year.

The number of optical patients climbed from 466 to 1,205 in the same time period, Tucker said.

Prescriptions increased from 23,368 to 36,000 during the same time period, she said.

“We’re going to surpass the numbers last year, there’s no question,” Tucker said, “So we’re not going to be out of work any time soon. We’re kind of squished.”

The increasing cost of health care “is a huge crisis in our country and our community,” Hurd said.

The good news is that Grand Junction is generous, Hurd said.

Money to operate the clinic comes from St. Mary’s Hospital and its operator, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kan. Some \$1.5 million, or 21 percent of the budget, comes from patients, and some money comes from tobacco tax revenue.

Some comes from foundations in Grand Junction and the Front Range and much of the in-kind services come from the physician population of Grand Junction, Hurd said.

Also, the nonprofit receives \$309,390 from individuals, businesses, faith-based organizations and others.

“We have a very generous community,” Hurd said. “Truly, they see that for most of us, lacking health insurance is just a paycheck away. They could very easily be in their shoes.”

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Income:

Grants, pledges, other income: \$1.25 million

Patient revenue: \$1.51 million

St. Mary's Hospital in-kind: \$1.496 million

Contributions: \$309,390

Sisters of Charity in-kind: \$844,207

Other income: \$1.33 million

Total income: \$6.75 million

Source: Marillac Clinic

Expenses:

Salaries & wages \$4.5 million

Supplies: \$777,043

Purchased services: \$744,142

Other expenses: \$868,896

Total expenses: \$6.88 million

Source: Marillac Clinic

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