

## Right place, right time: Neighborhood clinic provides a world of services

San Diego Union-Tribune - Tuesday, October 6, 1998

*Author: Ozzie Roberts*

Most days, the small medical office in the converted shop class at Hoover High School looks as if it is in the heart of a struggling Third World nation.

Parents, mostly mothers, of all different colors and hues, come with their babies and young children. Many speak languages and wear distinctive garbs that immediately set them apart culturally.

Most often they seek services for their young: inoculations through immunization programs; dental care through the center's dental clinic.

Older kids, elementary school-age to adolescent, stream in to the Hoover Health and Social Services Center, too -- with and without their parents.

The younger ones generally need relief from one childhood illness or another, while the older ones seek counseling services and help coping with more complex problems related to social issues.

Workers who run the center, daily from 7:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., never forget that most of these patients come from poverty and struggle in the surrounding cultural stew pot that is City Heights .

Above all, for many of the patients, the center is their primary health care provider.

"There are 25 or more different cultures that come through here," says Pat Bently, Hoover's school nurse and nurse practitioner. "We have Chinese, Vietnamese, Africans, Mexicans ... all different people, and that requires the staff to always be culturally sensitive.

"And it can be almost like a main emergency room around here -- we never really know what's coming through that door ... But you have to be ready."

The Hoover Health and Social Service Center has always been up to the challenges, she adds.

It was born six years ago, primarily, through a collaboration between the school and Children's Hospital, amid an influx of refugees from a variety of struggling foreign nations, who were changing the face of City Heights .

School and hospital officials agreed such a center would be a vital resource for the

community.

The service center's primary goal is to provide medical and dental care, mental health services and health education free for all students at Hoover and its 11 feeder schools, says pediatrician Herbert Kimmons.

He and a rotating support staff of five from Children's help run the center, the only high school in the county, he says, with a school-based health center.

And, he adds, it is one of only a few such centers in the nation to offer dental care after Children's Dental Health Association opened the dental clinic two years ago.

Now about 10 different social service agencies collaborate, in one way or another, to running the center.

They help provide a range of services, including volunteer programs, through which Hoover students themselves help expand the center's outreach to peers and others in the community.

Clients can get information and referrals on everything from job opportunities to sources of emergency aid. They can get education on how to avoid smoking, alcohol and other drugs. And individual family and group counseling is available to those who need and want it. Center coordinator Mary Jo McCarey, a school counselor the past 19 years, says the operation's strongest asset is its ability to be a social service outreach to families through the students.

It makes a big difference, especially to adolescents and families struggling just to make ends meet, she says, adding: "I don't think many of these families or adolescents would try to access health care unless someone was right there -- spending the time, telling them about it."

The center does just that.

Among the most effective of the student outreach programs, McCarey says, is the center's Student Well-being Advocacy Program (SWAP).

Hoover juniors and seniors, interested in careers in health and human services fields, volunteer to get in-class training and then work in the program, mainly as peer counselors and health center representatives.

In those roles, they act as interpreters and otherwise assist families and students with limited English-speaking skills.

The volunteers also serve as mediators and counselors for fellow students on adolescent health issues. And they work as ambassadors within the community, spreading the word about the center through meetings, seminars and conferences.

Football star Willie Everett, a SWAP volunteer, attests to the multiple benefits he's received through his association with the center.

The 18-year-old senior says working to help his peers in need has greatly improved his own self-esteem, leaving him feeling that he is making a much-needed contribution to his community.

And the clinic has helped him help himself, too, at times.

Last year, when he and his girlfriend broke up, he says, "I was depressed I didn't know what to do," at first.

Willie soon recalled some of the advice that, as a SWAP volunteer, he imparts to others. And, eventually, he turned to the center for counseling. He and McCarey agree that helped get him back on track.

"I'm over it," Willie says. "And I feel much better now."

Such sentiment is good medicine for the Hoover center staff, letting them know they are reaching their goal to keep the families in this community healthy -- inside and out.

Finding care where you need it, when you need it

## CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CENTER

Main Campus

300 Children's Way, San Diego

(619) 576-1700

Scripps Otay Family Health Center

1637 Third Ave., Suites B and H

Chula Vista

(619) 425-1780

Services: Primary and preventive care for infants, children, adolescents and adults; family planning; prenatal and perinatal care; gynecology; HIV testing and counseling; health education; health care for the homeless.

Comprehensive Health Center

286 Euclid Ave., Suite 302

San Diego

(619) 527-7330

Services: Primary and preventive care for infants, children, adolescents and adults; family planning; gynecology; teen pregnancy prevention program; health education.

## CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CENTER COMMUNITY LOCATIONS

(Satellite offices of the hospital)

East County

Center for Child Protection

2295 Fletcher Parkway, El Cajon

Services: Mental health treatment, parent education, family support.

Children's Alpine Center

1730 Alpine Blvd., Suite 113, Alpine

Services: Primary care pediatrics, occupational therapy screenings, physical therapy screenings, speech-language pathology screenings.

Children's East County Rehab Center

8380 Center Drive, Suite E, La Mesa

Services: Occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology.

Children's Pediatric Specialists

8881 Fletcher Parkway, Suite 235, La Mesa

Services: Developmental evaluation, neurology, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, pulmonology, surgery.

North County Coastal

Center for Child Protection

3142 Vista Way, Suite 207, Oceanside

Services: Mental health treatment.

Children's North County Center

4120 Waring Road, Oceanside

Services: Audiology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, outpatient psychiatry.

Children's Pediatric Specialists

161 Thunder Drive, Suite 103-B, Vista

Services: Cardiology, endocrinology, neurology.

North County Inland

Children's Pediatric Specialists

215 S. Hickory St., Suite 212, Escondido

Services: Allergy/asthma, cardiology, dermatology, endocrinology, neurology, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, pulmonology, outpatient psychiatry.

Children's Rancho Bernardo Center

11770 Bernardo Plaza Court, Suite 260, San Diego

Services: Audiology, developmental evaluation, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, outpatient psychiatry.

South Bay

Center for Child Protection

1261-D Third Ave., Chula Vista

Services: Home support service, mental health treatment, parent education.

Children's South Bay Center

340 Fourth Ave., Suite 18, Chula Vista

Services: Audiology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology.

Temecula

Children's Health Center

29645 Rancho California Road, Suite 138

Services: Cardiology, primary care pediatrics, outpatient psychiatry.

El Centro

Children's Pediatric Specialists

I.V. Medical Center Building

1745 S. Imperial Ave., Suite 105

Services: Allergy/immunology, cardiology, dermatology.

For information on these and additional Children's affiliated services, please call Children's Healthcare Referral Service at (800) 788-9029

Caption: 5 PICS 1 CHART

1,2. Getting the point: Sophomore Eddie Bautista went to the center for treatment of an injured elbow. First, though, he goes through routine preliminaries of having his vital signs checked. Receptionists (above) stand ready to help guide those who come seeking assistance at the health center, which opens its doors at 7:30 a.m. every weekday during the school year. 4,5. Getting the point: Sophomore Steven Franklin (above) is one of many Hoover High students who know to come to the Hoover Health and Social Services Center for their medical needs. Here, he gets an immunization administered by medical assistant Debbie Padilla. Following his shots, Franklin listens attentively, (left) along with Padilla, as nurse practitioner, Diana Thompson, (right) schools him on how to stay healthy. (13) 6. Finding care where you need it, when you need it (13) 1,2,3,4,5. NELVIN CEPEDA

Memo: For chart see end of text.

*Edition: 1,7,8*

*Section: SPECIAL: KIDS' NEWS DAY*

*Page: 12*

*Column: KEEPING FAMILIES HEALTHY*

*Index Terms: MEDICINE ; SCHOOLS ; LIST. PROFILE.; Hoover Health and Social Services Center*

*Record Number: UTS1415582*

*Copyright 1998, 2007 Union-Tribune Publishing Co.*

*\*\*\*Reproduced with permission granted by San Diego Union-Tribune\*\*\*  
Full-text obtained via NewsBank*