

Clinics offering free and low-cost health care are on the rise



Photos by SMILEY N. POOL/Staff Photographer

A rainbow emerged over Tapestry Healthcare (right) after a storm moved through McKinney on Thursday evening. The all-volunteer clinic is open nine hours a week and provides medical services on a sliding scale.

A pot of gold for uninsured, poor

By LINDA STEWART BALL
Staff Writer

Carmen Cabrera left the new nonprofit health clinic in McKinney clutching medicine for her 13-year-old son's sinus infection, feeling relieved.

The visit last week was \$10, including the cost of the antibiotics.

"I tell the doctor I appreciate it so much," said Ms. Cabrera, a McKinney housekeeper whose family has no health insurance.

Her son Ismael Cabrera was among 62 patients treated at Tapestry Healthcare since its doors opened Feb. 24.

The all-volunteer clinic, which is open nine hours a week, pro-



vides services on a sliding scale.

"We don't turn anybody away," said Ray A. Coleman, Tapestry's founder and chief executive officer.

Richardo Lopez was examined Thursday at Tapestry Healthcare. The 5-year-old was treated for an eye infection that had kept him out of school.

Located in a building that was once a pizza parlor, Tapestry is one of three grass-roots clinics in Collin County that have sprung up to serve the growing number of un-

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employed, uninsured or low-income people in the area.

The other two are based in Plano.

A fourth, Children and Community Health Center of McKinney, is slated to open Aug. 1.

All rely on grants and donations of cash, supplies and talent to survive.

"The need is greater than I thought it was," said Dr. Brian Procter, a family practitioner in McKinney who serves as Tapes-

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READERS' SOUNDOFF

Tapestry can contribute to local health care relief

Dear Editor:

I have read with interest the recent articles in the *Courier-Gazette* regarding the problems associated with providing health care for thousands of Collin County citizens that do not have health insurance. In February of this year, the Tapestry Healthcare Community Clinic opened its doors at 402 N. Tennessee St., in McKinney to help address this very problem. Since we opened, we have been overrun with patients. Currently we are open two evenings a week and typically see 20 to 30 patients each evening. Many patients arrive hours before we open in hopes of seeing a physician. The reason we are only open two days a week is because all of our staffing including physicians, nurses, management and office staff are volunteers and the hours that they can allocate to this cause is

limited.

Recently, Tapestry began exploring ways to extend its hours of operations because two nights a week is not enough to service the need. In order to do so, Tapestry will need full-time paid staffing because volunteers cannot allocate this much time. And of course this takes money. But less money than you might think. Because a community clinic does not have to invest in the large capital improvements that hospitals must invest in and because hospitals must be equipped to handle highly specialized cases that Tapestry cannot treat, Tapestry costs for basic medical care are much less than a hospital's cost for the same services. Therefore, Tapestry expects to expand its hours of operations to between 30 and 40 hours per week in the near future.

In order to finance this expansion

of services, Tapestry will need three sources of funding. The first is patient revenues. Tapestry charges are based on a sliding scale fee for patients care. Our fees range from \$10 to \$40 depending on what the patient is capable of paying. With an average fee of \$20, we can fund a large portion of our operating cost. Secondly we have applied for grants from both the State and the County. These are not large grant requests because even a small \$25,000 grant from the state and the county can make a big difference in Tapestry's ability to operate. Thirdly, hundreds of McKinney and Collin County citizens and businesses have contributed private dollars for this community service. This generosity allowed Tapestry to begin operations in February of this year and has enabled Tapestry to remain open delivering needed health care for the

past five months. With additional private donations, with small grants from the County and State and with patients contributing what they can, Tapestry can and will make its contribution toward relieving the crisis our community faces in addressing the health care needs of all of our citizens.

Finally, if you compare the cost of a typical Hospital Emergency room visit that can run into the hundreds of dollars with Tapestry's average charge of \$20 per patient visit, it is easy to see that private healthcare organizations like Tapestry are an excellent investment for a community. For a fraction of the cost that the hospitals are losing each year, we can provide health care to all our citizens.

Don Day
Board Chair
Tapestry Health Care Clinic