

Caring Times

A Publication for the Friends and Supporters of the Caring for Children Foundation of Texas

Winter 2011



The mission of the Caring for Children Foundation of Texas' Care Van Program is to immunize uninsured and medically underserved Texas children, and provide health, nutrition and exercise education, as well as other health-related services.

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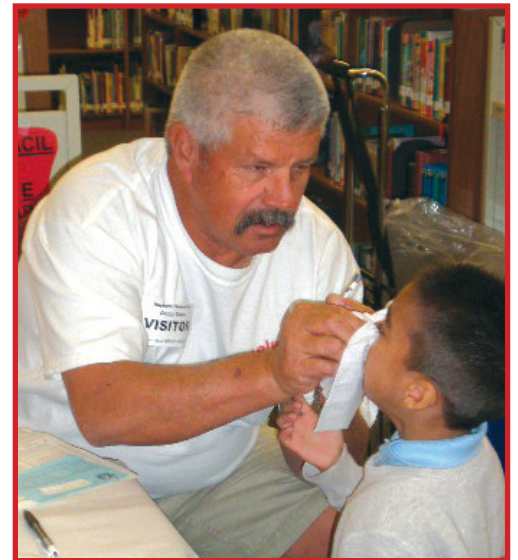
Care Van Collaborates with Dallas County to Provide Flu Shots for Grand Prairie Students

When Dallas County Health and Human Services, in collaboration with Grand Prairie Independent School District, wanted to offer flu shots to all elementary school age children in the district, they turned to the Care Van Program for help.

Due to time constraints, the Health and Human Services staff asked the Care Van program to collaborate with them to immunize children in 14 of the district's 24 elementary schools. Clinics started Oct. 5 and continued through the first week of November. By mid-October, the Care Van had already visited six schools and immunized 1,082 children against seasonal and H1N1 flu. In all, 4,789 children were immunized in the effort. School clinics are easily conducted with consent forms sent home to parents so that children are immunized during the school day, with very little time away from the classroom.

Monitoring Flu Absences

This project was implemented by Dallas County to gather important data to see the effectiveness of immunizing an entire school population. Data collected during the past two flu seasons indicated that



Danny Saenz helps a student who has just received a flu immunization

the highest number of flu cases were found in children at the elementary level. Grand Prairie ISD has agreed to monitor and report the number of children who miss school from the flu during 2010-11. This data will be compared to previous flu seasons to see the effectiveness of more children receiving the flu vaccine. By cutting down illness in school-age children, the illness rate in the entire community is expected to decline as well. ❤️

For more information on the Care Van® Program or to schedule an appearance, visit carevan.org, or call 800-258-5437, option #1.



Longhorn legend and tournament honorary co-chair Coach Darrell Royal, center, visited with Pat Hemingway Hall, right, president and CEO of Health Care Service Corporation and past chair of the Caring for Children Foundation of Texas, and Darren Rodgers, president of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas and Foundation president.

Annual Speaker's Golf Tournament Another Success

Thanks to generous sponsors, great volunteers and more than 300 players, the 8th annual Speaker's Golf Tournament was another great success. The tournament, held Sept. 22 at Barton Creek in Austin, benefitted the Caring for Children Foundation of Texas Care Van Program. The funds from the tournament will enable the Foundation to continue providing immunization services to uninsured children throughout

Texas during the coming year. In addition, the Foundation will be able to continue expanding its new dental initiative, which provides preschool and elementary school-age children with dental screenings and fluoride treatments.

The Foundation is grateful to Speaker Joe Straus and members of the Texas House of Representatives for their support of the 2010 tournament. ❤️

Care Van, Fire Department Unite to Serve Houston Communities

The Care Vans may not have sirens and flashing lights, but they are always ready in times of urgency and emergencies, as are Houston firefighters. So an initiative between the two is a natural fit.

In 2004, the Houston Fire Department started hosting monthly Care Van clinics at fire stations throughout the city, helping more than 20,000 CHIP, Medicaid and uninsured children receive their required and recommended immunizations.

The immunization outreach program in the greater Houston area has immunized more than 100,000 children since 1998. Care Van personnel have been through hurricanes and tropical storms, reaching out to immunize families who are at risk of disease from flood waters.

This "public/private" collaboration reaches far beyond just giving shots to children at fire stations. The trust that is built in the communities surrounding the fire stations that host immunization events helps the Care Van program serve the many uninsured families throughout the city.



New Houston Fire Chief Terry Garrison took time from his busy first day on the job to learn more about the Care Van Program.

In September, the Care Van Program was honored to have a surprise visitor at a fire station clinic, new Houston Fire Chief Terry Garrison. Chief Garrison had just arrived from the Phoenix Fire Department.

"The Care Van Program is incredible; to actually go into our communities and provide such a valuable service to our most important customers, our children. The immunizations that they provide will definitely help make families stronger and enhance our community. It is an honor to provide our fire stations as a place of gathering and support for such a worthwhile endeavor," Chief Garrison said. ❤️

Care Van Joins the Parade at the Fire Ant Festival

The Care Van recently made a trip to Marshall for the annual Fire Ant Festival. Many people may not know what a Fire Ant Festival is, but for the Care Van program, it was a chance to bring the community together on a beautiful sunny fall day.



Young visitors to the Fire Ant Festival are surrounded by a group of larger-than-life characters.

A huge parade viewed by several thousand people got under way before the festival began. The Care Van was featured in the parade with Blue Bear, Blue Cross and Blue Shield's Health and Wellness Ambassador, and many Blue Cross volunteers, their children and grandchildren. Blue Bear rode in a golf cart, and others rode in wagons and strollers.

After the parade, children visited the Care Van booth in the town square to spin a wheel for prizes. It was a fun day and a great opportunity to tell the community about the Care Van Program and the importance of immunizing children on time, every time. ❤️

On the Road Again, Destination San Angelo

Recently the Caring for Children Foundation and the San Angelo Tom Green County Health Department signed an agreement to provide immunizations in 13 counties in the San Angelo area. These counties lack easy access to health services. Through the Care Van outreach program, families in these counties will now have the chance to receive no cost or low cost immunizations and other health services.

Jan McCleery, a registered nurse and immunization coordinator for the health department, is spearheading this very large endeavor. Jan is a true believer in outreach and it has been her dream to bring the Care Van to San Angelo.

Referring to a recent outing, Jan said, "We gave 211 shots in a few hours; 77 to adults and the remaining number to students and small children. We educated many more and were seen by the entire town. There were at least 2,000 people there. Businesses in town were calling and saying they had seen the 'big blue van' in town. Many in the school system and community came and were very happy we were there."

Currently the Care Van is shared by the San Angelo and Abilene Care Van programs. This collaboration is made possible by volunteers from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas who help transport the van between cities. ❤️

Collaboration Improves Health of Children and Adults in Wichita Falls



Blue Bear makes a guest appearance with volunteers in Wichita Falls.

In Wichita Falls, employees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) Full Service Unit and staff from the Wichita Falls-Wichita County Public Health District work together with the Care Van to provide immunizations and promote health and wellness for children and adults.

The successful collaboration between BCBSTX and the public health district has helped the Care Van Program offer services at no cost or low cost to families in Wichita County. The health department keeps the van at its office and uses it for immunization outreach. The BCBSTX office borrows the van for special events and health fairs promoting health and wellness for children and adults. Occasionally, the two groups work together, as they did at the Texas/Oklahoma Fair and the annual City Lights Festival and Parade.

The two groups enjoy working together with a common goal and dedication to the families in Wichita Falls and Wichita County. ❤️

Backbone of the Care Van Program.... Volunteers

Volunteer Leslie Gardner uses her organizational skills to help the Big Country Immunization Coalition and the Care Van Program



Seven years ago, Leslie Gardner volunteered to help out at the first Care Van clinic at Toys R Us in Abilene. In a matter of hours, the Care Van program immunized about 225 children and had hooked another volunteer for life. Leslie took baby steps at first, claiming she knew nothing about immunizing children. What she did not realize was the program's need for her organizational skills and the role she would play in the program's success. Leslie works in Abilene for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas.

Since that time, the Care Van program in Abilene has immunized thousands

of uninsured or underinsured children in the Big Country. Leslie has taken a leadership role in recruiting and scheduling volunteers and medical help for clinics and in submitting press releases, fliers and posters to the media, schools and other interested people. She chairs the Big Country Immunization Coalition and attends most of the Care Van clinics. Because of Leslie's desire and determination that no child becomes ill from a vaccine-preventable disease, this program continues to grow under her watchful eyes. Thank you Leslie for your time and dedication to the Big Country Care Van Program! ❤️

Community Focus and Collaboration: Building Healthier Futures



The launch of the new immunization outreach initiative with the San Angelo Health Department as well as the established outreach efforts with the Dallas/Fort Worth Care Van, Wichita Falls - Wichita County Public Health District and the Houston Fire Department in this issue highlight two of the

cornerstones of the Care Van Program since its inception in 1997 — community focus and collaboration.

Although the Care Van Program is found from El Paso to Houston, the Panhandle to San Antonio, it has always been and remains to this day focused on meeting the individual needs of each community that it serves. Since its beginning, the Program has continually adapted to fit the needs and challenges of those communities or regions. Each community is different and the No. 1 goal remains how to provide the best access to immunizations for uninsured or underinsured families.

The second cornerstone continues to be community collaboration — working together with local health departments, businesses, civic groups and volunteers. These organizations, groups and individuals bring tremendous energy and resources to the goal of immunizing more uninsured children each year. Without this collaboration and cooperation at the local level, the hundreds of Care Van immunization events held at schools, apartment complexes, shopping malls, restaurants, and community centers — and the immunization of more than 50,000 children each year in Texas — would not be possible.

Working together across this great state of ours, we are immunizing thousands of uninsured or underinsured children every year and building healthier futures. Please join us! ❤️

Craig Jeffery
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RESOURCES:
Many suggested immunization
schedules exist online, including:
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention, cdc.gov
Department of State Health
Services, dshs.state.tx.us

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