

**Sept. 19, 2008**

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## **Medical volunteers provide vital health services to low-income uninsured residents**

As job losses and financial hardships leave many families without a reliable source of healthcare, low-income residents in southern Sarasota County with complex medical issues are getting the specialty care they need. The South County Community Clinic (SCCC) is staffed by over 100 community volunteers and 766 medical providers who donate their time and expertise. Some physicians are in active practice while others have recently retired.

Located on the campus of the South County Resource Center in south Venice, 7820 S. Tamiami Trail, the clinic is easily accessible to residents in the entire south county region. The SCCC medical director, Dr. William Heymann says “there is still opportunity for expansion of specialty areas to meet the complex medical needs of patients served through the program.” He adds that, all volunteers receive “state sponsored liability protection” under the Florida sovereign immunity statutes. Volunteer physicians can provide care on-site in the South County Family Health Center Adult Health clinic area or at their own clinic or office.”

The SCCC was established nearly a decade ago, through a partnership between, SCHED/South County Family Health Center, Venice Regional Medical Center, Sarasota Memorial Hospital, and the Senior Friendship Centers. Under Dr. Heymann’s supervision, the clinic operates specialty clinics during both day and evening hours to help minimize the amount of time patients have to take off from work for appointments. A range of specialty clinic services are available including cardiology, dermatology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, gynecology, neurology, ophthalmology, orthopedic, otolaryngology, podiatry, pulmonology, radiology/oncology, rheumatology, urology/nephrology and limited surgery.

According to the Florida Health Insurance Study in 2004, an estimated 18.1 percent of Sarasota County residents were uninsured. Based on 2006 population figures, this represents 47,388 individuals, or more than one in six Sarasota County residents under the age of 65. Community Health Planners say that this number significantly understates the true number of uninsured and underinsured residents currently in the county.

The SCCC services are available to all southern Sarasota county medically needy residents who meet the state eligibility criteria of 200 percent below the federal poverty level. Typically, residents are referred to the SCCC by partnering organizations.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Health Department at 941-861-3380 or visit [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org).