



## CSHC Spotlight on:

### Westside Park Elementary School Health Center



Situated on the edge of the vast Mojave Desert in Southern California, Adelanto is a small, rural community with one school health clinic located at Westside Park Elementary School. Sponsored by the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, the clinic serves children and families of Westside Park Elementary, as well other local school children and families in the community. “The County never intended to get into the business of running a school-based health clinic,” explains Kay Fangerow, Public Health Program Manager with San Bernardino County. “But Adelanto had tried for several years to qualify for a State Healthy Start grant, and then came to the County for assistance with grant writing.” Fangerow stepped in to help with a federal grant application, Adelanto received the HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration) grant and the school district got their health clinic which opened in 1995.

“Back then, we all thought the clinic would become self-sustaining within a few years,” explains Fangerow. “But we’ve since learned that it just isn’t feasible given the size of the city and the economic challenges of families in the area.” The clinic still receives HRSA grant money, the County covers administrative overhead, and Adelanto Unified School District provides in-kind support in the form of facilities, utilities and other services. This successful combination of resources has allowed the clinic to stay open for 15 years providing crucial services to the community.

In its early days, Fangerow admits she and the County knew nothing about running a school health clinic. They turned to CSHC for guidance to help them get started and for

networking opportunities at the annual conferences. Fangerow met others in the State with whom she could collaborate. “Both CSHC and NASBHC have been great for us ‘small-time’ clinics who don’t do this for a living,” says Fangerow. “We’re never going to have dozens of clinics or be able to rely on a large administrative staff. Having access to the resources and tools provided by CSHC was a big help to us, especially in our early years.”

Adelanto is technically not considered an underserved community because “residence” is defined as the post office where families receive their mail--which happens to be within 10 miles of an urban area with many physicians and hospitals. But the reality is most families in the community do not have access to transportation, so even 10 miles is too far to go for basic health care services. That’s where the health center comes in. The nurse and nurse practitioner at Westside Park Elementary School Health Center see approximately 1,300 patients a year and provide basic medical care, immunizations, dental screenings, and counseling services. A bilingual counselor is on site five days a week. Fangerow points out that there’s a great need for this service. Even though Adelanto is small, it still has big city problems related to drugs, abuse, and the chaotic economic challenges that affect the lives of many children. The clinic also maintains a van which is used to provide crucial transportation services. “The van allows us to take children to receive dental treatment in Loma Linda which is 60 miles away,” explains Fangerow. “Without transportation, these kids would have no way to get to the dentist or to go in for specialty medical care.” One child required four trips to a dentist for reconstructive dental work which finally

allowed him to eat without pain for the first time in his life. Until the child received a dental screening at the health center, his mother had never realized there was a problem and just assumed her son was a picky eater.

The Westside Park Elementary Health Center has some unique programs that it has developed in conjunction with local partners. The fire department not only provides CPR training on site, but it also purchased a washer and dryer for the clinic so they could launder donated clothes. A “Clothes Closet” is open to students and their families to pick out new and used clothing. The clinic also has partnered with Operation School Bell which provides one nice school outfit, a jacket and a pair of shoes for 200-300 children at the beginning of each school year. In addition, the clinic maintains a food bank on site which is supported by donations collected by the local Curves Health Club. The clinic is able to assist hundreds of families each year with staples like rice, beans, canned vegetables, and powdered milk.

Other partners include: Community Toolbox, a local nonprofit which provides nutrition education for Hispanic women; a nutritionist who presents lessons to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders on how to prepare healthy snacks; and St. Mary’s Hospital which will soon begin doing outreach to the adult community to do diabetes screening, blood tests, and follow up education. The health center also refers families to the Women, Infants and Children program, a federal food assistance service for low income women and children, and pregnant women.

The health center has been very successful involving parents in oversight of the clinic. “We’re required to maintain a board with 50% of its membership representing the community we serve,” explains Fangerow. “For us, that’s Hispanic moms.” Every September the clinic and school do a big outreach to recruit mothers and get them involved in the health center. To accommodate their needs, board meetings are held in the morning right after school starts and toys and snacks are provided for the young children who come along with their mothers.

“We’ve also translated the HRSA board training materials into Spanish and we have bilingual board members from St. Mary’s Hospital who have been a big help with training our moms on board governance and responsibilities.” Although there’s 90% turnover on the board every year, the clinic has managed to keep a wide variety of parents involved and spreading the word about the clinic and its services to the community.

The health center is proud of the job it’s done to teach parents to value health care and make preventive medical care a higher priority. And more parents now see the value of the health center as their children have benefitted from its services, or they’ve served on the board, or volunteered with one of the health center’s programs. “It’s never been easy,” says Fangerow. “But anytime there’s been talk of closing the clinic, the school district rallies and lets us know how vital we are to the families and children in this area. We’ll never be huge, but there’s still a great purpose for even the smallest clinics in the smallest communities.”

*By: Aileen Olson*

Started: 1995

Sponsor: San Bernardino County  
Department of Public Health

Facility: Examine room, counseling room,  
nurse’s room, reception area, and board  
meeting room.

Staff: Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Mental  
Health Counselor, Community Liaison,  
Office Clerk, County Administrator

Services: Comprehensive primary care,  
Sports exams, Counseling services, Dental  
screenings, Health education,  
Immunizations, Food bank, Clothes Closet

Patients: 1,200-1,300 per year

Visits: 3,200 per year