

Mobile Medical Care Unit's *Memorable Moments*

GALA RIBBON-CUTTING HELD ON MARCH 22, 2012

- More than 300 people attended event.
- Sponsors and Partners names shined brightly on the unit as *Pasco's Shining Stars*.
- Wrapping was provided by Leadership Pasco Class of 2012.
- **Big thanks** to all who attended!



Our hero: Bob Dillinger



Bob Dillinger (left) took the unit under his department. This provided immunity for all volunteers. He used his outreach budget to assist with the program and lobbied the legislature to get additional funding for a driver and a nurse practitioner.

Help meet dental needs

Dental issues plague the homeless. We provide antibiotics, but they are just a band aid. With a lack of proper care, infection leads to bigger problems that land the homeless in costly emergency rooms.

Funds need to be raised to provide vouchers for dental work or volunteer dentists willing to take one or two emergencies. Will you be our tooth fairy? Call Lucille or Pat at (727) 847-8100 or lpaterno@pascocountyfl.net.

Hospitals make 'Amazing Things Happen'

An article last year detailed the cost for emergency visits for the uninsured. It is a fact that the homeless who are ill seek help at emergency rooms, while others receive no health care at all.

All five of Pasco's hospitals have helped in various ways to move the Mobile Medical Care Unit to fruition.

Morton Plant Hospital and Foundation were the first to pledge a generous sum to make this project a reality. They gave half the salary of a nurse practitioner.

Florida Hospital and **Pasco Regional Medical Center** contributed to the purchase of the unit. **Trinity** and **HCA Bayonet Point** know the toll that the flu can take on this population. They ordered \$10,000 worth of flu vaccines for autumn distribution. Our nurse practitioner and volunteer nurses will administer them.

Each hospital did its part. Because of that, we can bring medical care to where the homeless live. We have based our mission on the plan initiated by Dr. Jim Withers, the "father of street medicine." He notes:

"... health care is going to where people are – either physically or, even more importantly, spiritually and emotionally. When they are shown that they matter – when that sinks in – hope grows, and Amazing Things Happen."



If it takes a village...It takes a county to purchase and run a Mobile Medical Unit.

It takes many to provide education to our young people. When I began the quest to provide medical care for the homeless, I realized it would take many partners and sponsors to make this a reality. That is exactly what happened. A big thanks must go to those who were on board at the start.

Health Department: Dr. Johnson was with Mr. Gallagher, our County Administrator, when we visited an outreach program to look at the Mobile medical unit. Dr. Johnson was a strong supporter from the beginning. As a physician, he understood the need and the limitations when caring for the homeless.

He offered to oversee our Nurse Practitioner and allowed the Health Department ARNP's to staff the unit so they would understand the issues. This would help in the selection of a permanent ARNP. The Nurse Practitioners Pam, Dori, Carol and their staff were all kind, caring and professional. They adapted procedures, kept smiles on their faces and provided outstanding care while working in a new

arena "Street Medicine." The impact they made is evident in this note:

"For all the wonderful things that you are doing....I THANK YOU WITH ALL MY HEART! Keep up the good work: God Bless You. Love John

Administration: From the first slurp of the soup at the outreach center, I knew John Gallagher was hooked and he has been totally supportive ever since. We park the unit at the county garage and Steve Meyer and his crew lovingly care for it.

All the above are important but without our sponsors providing funding, we could not have purchased the unit. Letters had to be written, appointments made with possible sponsors, charts and maps prepared: enter the indomitable Lucille. She organized material, made appointments, put together packets and kept me on track. Pasco County has some very creative people and Shelly Isitt and Jane Hawkins provided eye catching flyers, posters, and maps. And the always thinking Mike Fasano worked the legislature to provide additional funding in the Public Defender's outreach budget so the project could continue to grow.

