

# Mobile clinic cares for uninsured

Health

Dominican Hospital health care outreach expands to Watsonville

8-9-14

By Donna Jones

djones@santacruzsentinel.com  
@DonnaJonesSCS on Twitter

**WATSONVILLE** » By the time Juana Perez Naranjo stepped down from Dominican Hospital's Mobile Wellness Clinic on Friday morning, she had a readout on her blood pressure, cholesterol and

blood sugar.

The visit cost \$15, tests and examination by nurse practitioner Rachel Ruby included.

And she didn't have to travel far from her Watsonville home. The clinic, housed in a 37-foot recreational vehicle retrofitted with examining rooms, a lab, a reception area — even a lift to provide

access to patients in wheelchairs or relying on walkers, was parked at St. Patrick's Catholic Church on Main Street.

After operating at several sites in North and Mid-County during the past five years, the mobile clinic has expanded to Watsonville. An eighth site is soon to

MOBILE » PAGE 4



Nurse practitioner Rachel Ruby examines Juana Perez Naranjo in Dominican's Mobile Wellness Clinic.

SHMUEL THALER  
— SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

## Mobile

FROM PAGE 1

open on Santa Cruz's West-side.

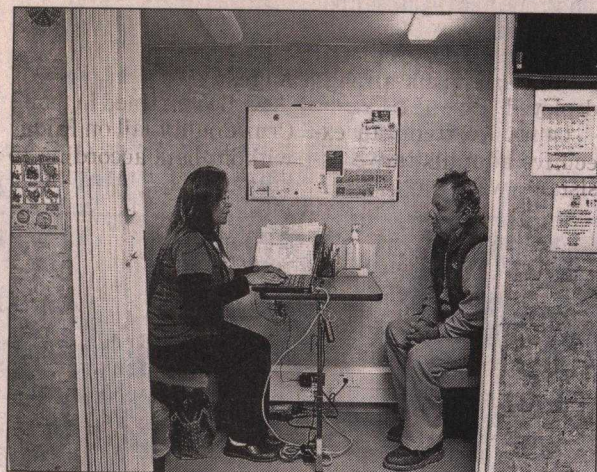
"It's amazing how many people we see who have been going without care," said Sister Michaela Siplak, director of Community Health Integration Services at Dominican.

Registered nurse Beatriz Walsh recalled the man who showed up at the clinic with dangerously high blood sugar levels. Without treatment, he risked having a stroke or kidney failure, she said. But after his clinic visit, she began working with him in her education office at the hospital to bring his diabetes under control.

"I told him, 'You need more help,'" Walsh said. "He understands now you have to work at this."

Many people have no place to go, or they are unaware of resources that might be available when they show up at the clinic, Walsh said. In addition to immediate medical attention, she tries to connect them to a stable source of health care.

"Sadly, for some it's hard to get them a medical home,"



SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL

Community Health Coordinator Esther Bustos checks Pedro Partida Decera into Dominican Hospital's Mobile Wellness Clinic on Friday.

Walsh said.

Most of their patients are adults. Some are elderly. Others have families to feed. Many are young adults, working as baristas or other part-time work. None have much money to spare, Siplak said. She refers some to Rotocare, a once-weekly free clinic at the Live Oak Senior Center.

At the mobile clinic, patients come in complaining of headaches or stomach trouble, Siplak said. Sometimes, especially at a new location like Watsonville, people who haven't seen

a doctor in years seize the opportunity for a check up.

At St. John's in Felton, one of the busiest stops, respiratory problems are especially common.

"Asthma, pneumonia, ear infections," said clinic coordinator Esther Bustos, suggesting forest dampness might be a contributing factor.

Last year, the clinic saw nearly 2,500 patients.

Siplak said bringing services into communities helps prevent serious illness and keeps patients out of the room. She sees broader ap-

## MOBILE WELLNESS CLINIC

**What:** Roving drop-in clinic aimed at providing health care and screenings for uninsured and under-insured patients.

**Who:** Operated by Dominican Hospital.

**When:** Weekly or biweekly stops.

**Where:** Resurrection Church, Aptos; Our Lady Star of the Sea Church, Santa Cruz; St. Agustin Church, Scotts Valley; St. Patrick's Church, Watsonville; Holy Cross Church, Santa Cruz; St. John's Church, Felton; Davenport Resource Service Center, Davenport.

**Cost:** \$15.

**Funding:** Adrian Dominican Sisters; Dominican Hospital employees.

**Details:** For clinic information, call 831-713-8751. To donate, contact 831-462-7712 or givingtodominican@dignityhealth.org.

plications and would like to partner with other agencies to create a caravan of services. She envisions roving counselors and social workers setting up shop alongside the clinic.

"I believe in one-stop shopping," she said.