



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Felicia Castro-Leon is checked by Dr. Kevin Hasenauer at the RotaCare clinic.

When the free clinic opens, there's a line at the door

By **DONNA KIMURA**
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LIVE OAK — Healing earaches, sinus problems and respiratory ailments are all in a night's work at the RotaCare Free Health Clinic, where 300 people have come for help since it opened in July.

"I think it is responding to an unidentified need in the county," said Sister Marie Michaela Siplak, an Adrian Dominican nun who directs nursing at the clinic.

When the doors open at 6:30 p.m., there is usually a line outside, she said.

The clinic operates for two hours every Tuesday night at the Elena Baskin Live Oak Senior Center at 17th Avenue and Capitola Road.

The poor, the uninsured and the recently unemployed have come for free medical help. About half have been children. College students and people from as far away as Watsonville have come for treatment.

Some disbelievingly ask if the services are really free.

They are, according to Sister Michaela.

Two volunteer physicians are usual-

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ly on staff each week. About 20 doctors are in the rotation.

On a recent Tuesday, one doctor is in the examining room with a young mother and her children. Another is examining a man troubled by a skin rash on his back.

After he is treated, the man picks up his bag and goes outside to wait for the bus.

Most of the ailments treated at the clinic are "episodic" illnesses like colds. The clinic does not provide injections.

"We are seeing everything from simple colds to dizziness to back pains," said Dr. Satish Chandra, a local internist and the clinic's medical director.

People, he said, are able to come to the RotaCare clinic for their problems

before they become sicker and must go to the emergency room.

Patients have heard about the Rotary Club-sponsored clinic through social-service agencies, schools and perhaps even notices posted in neighborhood laundry businesses. Word of mouth, however, has been the best advertisement.

Clinic volunteers guard their patients' privacy, giving neither names nor details. They also ask nothing about their patients' residency status or income.

Spanish translators are available.

The clinic is sponsored by five local Rotary Clubs — Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Sunrise, Capitola-Aptos, Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley.

The program relies on volunteer help, but the clubs raised about \$10,000 for start-up costs, and to help pay for medicine patients are prescribed.

"I think as word gets out more, the number of patients will get higher," said John Fisher, district governor of the Rotary.

Tax-deductible donations to the clinic may be sent to Santa Cruz Rotary, P.O. Box 711, Santa Cruz, CA, 95061. For more information, call 438-2956.