

\$400,000

9-4-02

grant slated for Beach Flats clinic

By **JEANENE HARLICK**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Beach Flats

A South County health center's dream of building a community clinic in one of Santa Cruz's most underserved areas has come true.

Salud Para La Gente has received a \$400,000 grant to turn a shop on the corner of **SANTA CRUZ** Leibbrandt and Riverside avenues into a medical and dental clinic for the Beach Flats neighborhood.

Two-thirds of the residents in the mostly poor, Latino community have no health insurance, a recent study by Mercy Charities Housing found. As a result, many go without health care and let illnesses progress until they're life-threatening, forcing a trip to the emergency room.

"We feel there is a tremendous need in the north part of the county that hasn't been addressed (until now)," said Arcadio Viveros, Salud's chief executive officer.

Nearly half of Beach Flats residents have chronic health problems such as diabetes, anemia, back pain and allergies, and nearly a third of women have never had a gynecological exam, the Mercy Housing study showed.

While the county Health Department and Planned Parenthood operate North County clinics, many Latino residents feel more comfortable taking care of their health needs at Salud, Viveros said. North County residents often travel to Salud's Watsonville clinic for its bilingual and bicultural services, he said.

The new clinic will not be limited to Beach Flats residents. Viveros envisions it as a regional clinic serving all of North County. He hopes to have it running within six months.

The clinic will be staffed with one doctor and one dentist and is expected to serve 7,000 to 9,000 people in its first year. It will include a small lab, three exam rooms, a pharmacy and three dental chairs — if Salud can convince the city to let them convert two parking spaces into additional clinic space.

Salud is seeking grants and donations to fund clinic operation — it will take about \$1.5 million to fund the facility once it reaches its peak, Viveros said.

Clinic hours will run 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, to start. It will be open until 8 p.m. one day a week. Eventually, Viveros hopes to extend operation hours to 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

The clinic will join a new affordable housing project that starts construction in Beach Flats this month. The \$12 million, 48-unit complex is being built by Mercy Housing and will include a child-care center.

The project is another step in the effort to turn the neighborhood from a castoff of the old tourism industry into a neighborhood in its own right. A tiny triangle of 1920's-era beach bungalows near the Boardwalk, it has no churches, schools or clinics.

Contact Jeanene Harlick at
jharlick@santa-cruz.com.