

Salud Para La Gente tells how it got the job done

By CHELA ZABIN
STAFF WRITER

12-16-89
Salud Para La Gente, which has raised more than \$600,000 for earthquake relief, passed out checks to local community organizations and honored workers, government officials and contributors at a dinner celebration at the Watsonville Woman's Club last night.

The money has come in from all over the world, said Richard Miranda, health education programs manager for the clinic.

Just the other day, Miranda said the clinic received a check for \$200 from an elderly woman in Japan who had visited Watsonville once. She had been through a major quake in Tokyo, Miranda said.

Much of the money has come

from individual donors sending in \$10, \$25 or \$50 checks, he said.

But corporations and community organizations have also sent money; several television stations have held telethons; and music producers have organized benefit concerts.

Among the groups honored last night were the Italian-American Men's Club of San Jose, which

raised \$20,000 for the clinic; the Rotary Club of San Mateo, which gave \$22,000; the City of San Jose, which contributed \$25,000, plus food and clothing; KSTS-TV, Channel 48, which raised \$105,000 in a telethon; and the Marin Community Foundation, which contributed \$120,000.

Salud also received a \$10,000 donation from an anonymous

source through State Sen. Henry Mello, and \$10,000 from Driscoll Strawberry Association Inc.

The clinic has also received and distributed about \$1 million worth of food, clothing and other supplies, Miranda said.

There are several more fund-raising events in the works, Miranda said. Two concerts are planned in the Bay Area; a group

of ski resorts in Idaho is donating a portion of this season's proceeds; and a health-providers group in Minnesota is working on a fund-raising drive.

Miranda was on vacation when the earthquake hit. When he returned to work a few days later, clinic director Barbara Garcia told

See SALUD page 13 ▶

SALUD

▶ From page 1

him she was concerned about the lack of media coverage Watsonville was getting. Miranda, Ruth Lopez, outreach coordinator for the clinic's AIDS education project, and other staffers at the clinic's health education program went to work on drumming up media attention for Watsonville and the clinic.

The clinic got that attention. Last night, speaking in front of the crowd, Miranda said he and Lopez got to the point where they answered "200 to 300 calls a day" from various media representatives. The two eventually appeared on the front page of the New York Times in a story about the clinic's relief efforts, he said.

Once people knew about the need, the donations "just began coming in," he said.

Some hate mail came too, he said in an earlier interview, adding that one nasty letter was addressed only to "Richard Miranda, Salud, Watsonville."

"We're just like Santa Claus," he said.

Miranda and Lopez also contacted Latino elected officials and sent letters off to Latino leaders around the country and Puerto Rico and to community foundations and major corporations. The Marin Community Foundation, in addition to making a donation, sent a staffer down to help with the fund-raising and to sort through the donations and get the accounting in order.

The funds are being used in several different ways.

Vouchers for food, clothing, rent and other supplies worth between \$250 and \$400 were given out to 500 families at Salud, Migrant Media and other community organizations. Another set of those vouchers will be passed out in January, Miranda said.

Another 640 families will receive \$50 food vouchers in Christmas boxes the clinic will give out. The boxes will also include food, comforters, toys and vouchers for shoes, Miranda said.

Last night, Salud gave \$10,000 each to Fenix Services Inc. and Migrant Media, and \$5,000 each to Familia Center in Santa Cruz and Assumption Church in Pajaro.

Some of the money Salud has raised will go to help reimburse the cost of clinic operations, which have been greatly expanded as a result of the earthquake.

Minutes after the quake, the clinic provided medical aid to the people injured by falling bricks downtown. It stayed open around the clock for several days after the quake to deal with earthquake-related injuries and illnesses.

The number of people the clinic has treated has continued to swell as many people who were living in tents, shelters and cars came down with illnesses and stress-related conditions.

Salud also sent mobile medical units out to the more remote locations.

After being presented with a plaque and a vacation in Calistoga, along with certificates for a mud bath and a massage, Garcia joked that the day before the quake, Salud staffers had been at a retreat, planning possible expansions. One of the ideas being tossed around was to set up a mobile clinic.

"Little did I know we'd have one in four days," she said.

The clinic also set up an information table and sent staff members and volunteers out into the community to get out information in Spanish. A food and clothing distribution center was set up in a building the clinic was planning to move into.

Miranda estimated the clinic spent \$350,000 in clinic services following the quake. Salud is seeking reimbursement from FEMA, he said.

Many of the people coming into the clinic now are suffering emotional problems because of the quake, Miranda said. The clinic will soon be hiring a bilingual, bicultural mental-health worker to address that need, thanks to a \$35,000 grant from Pacific Bell.

Another portion of money is going toward long-term housing, Miranda said. Some \$50,000 is earmarked for that purpose, although the clinic hasn't yet worked out all the details on how it will spend the money. Former city planner Doug Spinelli was hired to put together a study and plan for how the funds could be used.

Miranda said probably what will happen is that some of the long-term housing money will be used to help people living in yellow-tagged homes to make repairs.

Some legal technicalities remain to be worked out before that can happen, he said. The clinic is working with the Watsonville Housing Restoration Coalition, made up of city workers and community groups, on those issues.