

# Medical clinic opens doors in Watsonville

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STAFF WRITER

Santa Cruz Medical Clinic celebrated the opening of a new location in Watsonville yesterday. The idea for the new clinic was conceived after staff members noticed that 21,000 of their visits last year were from Watsonville area patients.

The site, at 550 S. Green Valley Road, was formerly occupied by Sunbay Florist throughout most of the 1970s and '80s, but had been unoccupied for about six years.

Thomas Hart, vice president of Santa Cruz Medical Clinic, said he noticed the vacant building while driving around Watsonville last February. He thought it would be an ideal location.

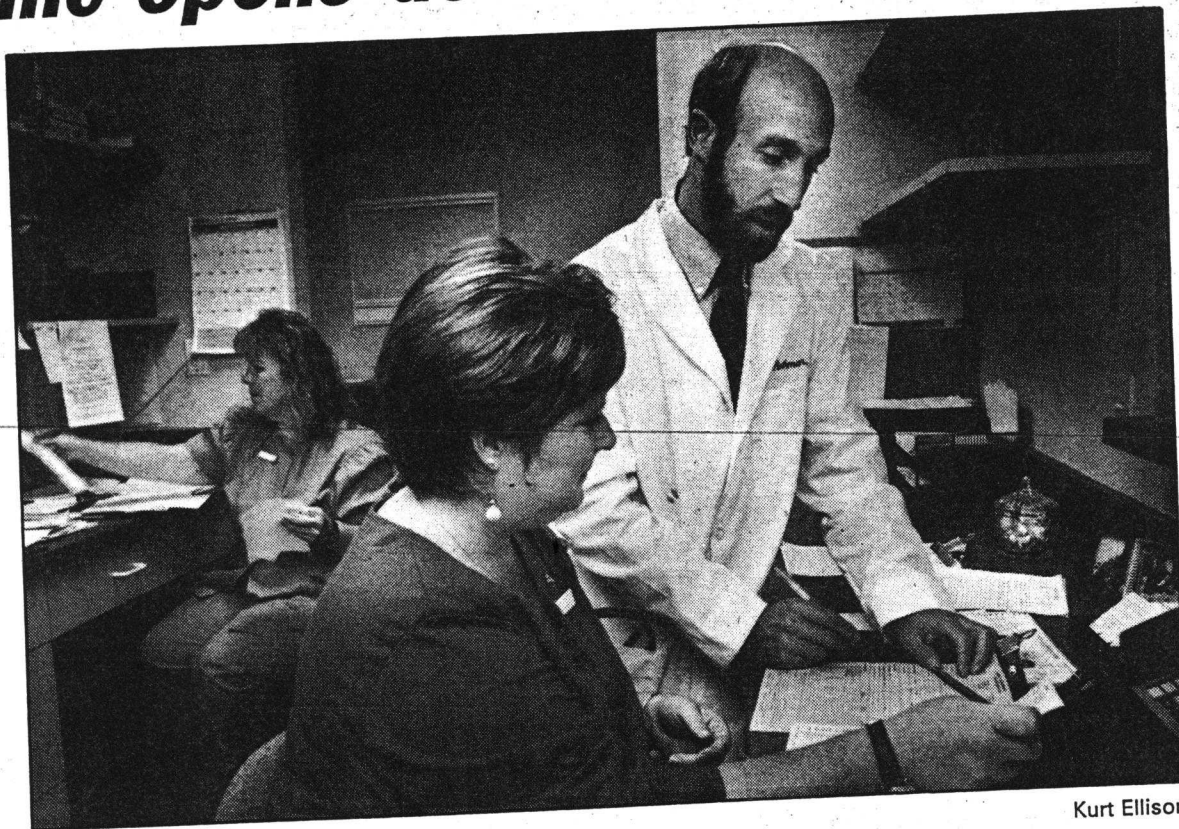
"A successful medical clinic needs exposure, and its own identity," Hart said. "If you're mixed in with retail, it's more difficult."

The Watsonville clinic, which opened its doors Oct. 7, has four doctors on staff, with room for two more if its case load grows.

Dr. Vaal Rothman oversees the clinic's urgent care unit, which deals with minor emergencies Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The clinic has three general family practitioners: Dr. Denise Aalders, who focuses on obstetrics; Dr. William Richards, who focuses on pediatrics; and Dr. Lawrence Lippmann, who focuses on preventative medicine.

The clinic has four Spanish-



Kurt Ellison

**Dr. Vaal Rothman took care of business in the urgent care department assisted by receptionist Sharon Chong at the Santa Cruz Medical Clinic's Watsonville office yesterday. LVN Shelly Vest is in background at left.**

speaking staff members, including a Spanish-speaking nurse, who can translate for the doctors when necessary.

A large room is set aside for physical therapy. The clinic doesn't have the staff or equipment yet to do physical therapy at the Watsonville site, but hopes to add the service as business picks up.

Right now patients requiring

physical therapy are referred to the clinic's Seabright Avenue location in Santa Cruz.

Since opening its doors less than a month ago, the Watsonville clinic has served about 1,400 people. Most of those came in for \$5 flu shots, including Watsonville City Councilman Oscar Rios, who got his flu shot during yesterday's reception. The grand opening was at-

tended by about 30 political and civic leaders.

The clinic's doctors have seen between 400 and 500 patients since Oct. 7.

*Prospective patients may get acquainted with the clinic's physicians in its "Get Acquainted Program," in which physicians will return phone calls and discuss medical concerns. For more information, call 458-5865.*