

# SoMdNews.Com

Southern Maryland Newspapers Online

## Health Partners gets grant for more dental care

**\$120,000 will provide staffers**

**Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2010**

By ALAN BRODY  
Staff writer

Health Partners, a Charles County volunteer medical clinic, has received a two-year dental grant that will enable it to more than double its capacity for uninsured residents.

The \$120,000 grant will be officially announced during a news conference this morning at Health Partners' office in Waldorf.

"It's really going to allow us to make a difference in the community," said Christine Mulcahey, executive director of Health Partners.

The money will be used to hire a part-time dental hygienist and a dental assistant/administrator, which will allow three volunteer dentists to focus more on restorative oral health than preventive care, she said.

It's not known how many Charles County residents lack dental insurance, but Mulcahey said the grant will enable the clinic to increase the number of low-income patients it serves from about 175 to 430.

Health Partners focuses on providing care to children, although Mulcahey said she hopes to reach more adults through the grant.

Founded in 1992, the nonprofit charitable organization also works with two Charles County elementary schools — Mount Hope/Nanjemoy and Gale Bailey — to identify uninsured children who receive dental checkups at their schools.

"We are going to where the need is in a lot of cases," said Mulcahey, adding that Health Partners recently provided care to 25 youths at Lions Camp Merrick.

Sen. Thomas "Mac" Middleton, who will attend this morning's announcement, said Health Partners fills an important gap in coverage, particularly in a down economy when high unemployment has led to more people without health insurance.

"Now is the perfect time for it," he said.

The award issued by the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission is one of 14 grants for fiscal 2011 that are projected to serve more than 76,000 low-income, uninsured Marylanders. The grant money totals about \$1.3 million in fiscal 2011 funds, which is slated to increase to \$3.1 million if multi-year grant awards are handed out, according to data the commission provided.

Health Partners received a grant from the commission in 2007 that was used to provide primary care for more than 1,500 uninsured Charles County residents.

"The Commission is dedicated to addressing the most pressing health care needs in the community," John A. Hurson, the panel's chairman, said in a statement.

Middleton (D-Charles), who chairs the Senate Finance Committee and sponsored the legislation that created the Community Health Resources Commission, also has been a staunch advocate for increased oral health care funding.

The issue was thrust into the spotlight in 2007 when 12-year-old Deamonte Driver, a Prince George's County boy, died from an abscessed tooth. His family was uninsured and could not find a Medicaid dentist who would cover the cost to extract the tooth before the abscess had spread to his brain, by which time doctors could not save him.

[abrody@somdnews.com](mailto:abrody@somdnews.com)