

February 2010 marks the eighth year that the Good Samaritan Clinic of Haywood County will host a Valentine's Day Love Offering to be held in churches across the county. Over 38 churches participated in the fundraiser last year and GSC is expecting more support this year.

"We have already had commitment from over fifteen churches to participate. It is a great feeling to help people feel better through medical care. What many people may not realize is that their donation could be helping someone sitting next to them on the very same pew. We have patients from all walks of life and many working people just can't afford health insurance," explained Donda Bennett, Executive Director.

With a special Valentine's Day theme the staff at GSC has been busy distributing posters, bulletin inserts, and donation envelopes to area churches. Some churches are designating Sunday, February 14th for this special offering and others are holding the fundraiser throughout the month of February.

"Nonprofits are struggling to meet operating expenses. GSC has definitely struggled in the past year but we are putting faith in individuals and churches to step up to help in 2010," said Bennett.

In 2009, the GSC primary care program provided over 4,397 patient visits. This amounts to over \$505,000 in free medical care. The mental health program had 1,460 patient visits with over \$15,910 in free therapy visits.

GSC provides primary medical care to uninsured adults ages 18 – 64 and 200% or more below the Federal Poverty Level. GSC has an intake screening process for new patients prior to their first visit at the clinic. Proof of income and eligibility is required for these screenings. They offer over 40 intake appointments each week for new patients. In January GSC qualified over 70 new patients. Clinic staff expect the need for services to grow more in coming months due to the state of the economy.

"We are seeing more people access our services than ever before. Many of our new patients have recently become unemployed or are self-employed and can't afford to continue health insurance," explained Louise Goss, intake staff.

GSC is one of the only full-time free clinics in North Carolina that provides care for both acute and chronic medical conditions. This means that they care for those who call the same day with sinus problems or viruses. They also care for those with ongoing conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. In these cases GSC sees the patient on a regular basis for follow-up and treatment.

"The goal is to offer high quality health care services to all uninsured and underserved adults," said Don Teater, Medical Director. "This is an opportunity to give to something local and have a direct impact on the people in your community."

To donate directly to the Valentine's Day Offering please mail your donation to GSC, 34 Sims Circle, Waynesville, NC 28786. If you would like more information or to have your church participate in the event, please contact Donda Bennett, Executive Director at 454-5287, ext 1002.